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**Exploring a Group of Students' School Experiences in  
a Secondary School: a Case Study in the  
Implementation of Invitational Education  
in  
Hong Kong**

Poon Kwok Leung, George

A thesis submitted on partial fulfilment of the  
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education

School of Education  
University of Durham

May, 2010

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## Exploring a Group of Students' School Experiences in a Secondary School: a Case Study in the Implementation of Invitational Education in Hong Kong

Poon Kwok Leung, George

### Abstract

*This thesis investigated the school experiences of 147 Form 3 academically low achievers in a secondary school, where Invitational Education was being implemented. The goal of Invitational Education is to create schools with a climate that encourages everyone in the school to experience success and its theory is based on the following four principles: respect, trust, optimism and intentionality. The present study described and analyzed how Invitational Education was implemented in the case study school and discussed how it might have influenced study participants' school experiences, particularly in their emotions in school, social relationships, attitude towards school and learning, sense of belonging, personal aspirations and self-concept of ability and effort. To answer the research questions, an exploratory study was conducted through a case-study approach in which the use of triangulation in collecting data was employed. The triangulation included in-depth interviews, participation observations, classroom teaching observations, questionnaires and document review, while the triangulation of sources involved 147 Form 3 study participants of the school. At the same time, out of 147 study participants of the same cohort, 20 informants were screened for three in-depth interviews each over six months. The themes of the in-depth interviews mainly concerned the informants' successful or unsuccessful learning experiences, general satisfaction about their school life, their relationships in school and their attitude towards school and learning. Forming the theoretical basis for the investigation of the thesis was the approach of Invitational Education and motivation theories. Findings of the study have provided the researcher with insights and evidence showing how some of the inviting strategies managed to facilitate study participants to acquire general satisfaction in their school life and learning and activate their motivational dimensions, namely, social relationships, positive emotion, relatedness, intrinsic motivation, personal aspiration and self-perception of ability and effort.*



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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that all materials in this thesis are my original work and the thesis has not been submitted for another award or qualification offered by other institutions or universities.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to the Study

#### 1.0 Introduction

This thesis investigates the school experiences of a group of Form 3 students, who were regarded as academically low achievers (ALAs), in an educational context where Invitational Education (IE) was being implemented and examines how their motivation for learning was affected by IE. The goal of Invitational Education is to create schools with a climate that encourages everyone in the school to experience success (Novak, 2002) and Invitational Education theory (IET) is based on the following four principles: “respect, trust, optimism and intentionality” (Purkey & Novak, 1996). The field work of this study, which lasted for nine months, included in-depth interviews, structured and semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, participant observations and document review.

The research study draws on two bodies of extensive literature in relation to motivation theories and Invitational Education theories. The findings of the present study provide students’ real-life experience in their school and invaluable insights in the practice of Invitational Education being implemented in the case study school (*hereafter it is called ‘Star School’ as a pseudonym to protect privacy*).

The thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the background to the study, the organization of the thesis, the aims and scope of the study and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature that attempts to link all the core ideas concerning Invitation Education and motivation theories and form a coherent conceptual framework and argument for the research study. Chapter 3 discusses why a case study approach was adopted to address the research questions in this particular social setting; describes how the pilot studies contributed to the development of the present study and explains how the methods of collecting data were triangulated to enhance the reliability of the research. Chapter 4 aims to explore study participants’ perspectives on their school experiences and school life and analyze how they reacted to the school events, the teacher influence, the school policies and the ecological environment of the school. Chapter 5 describes and analyzes teachers’ aims, beliefs, strategies and work performed on the cohort of Form 3. It is also hoped to obtain further understanding about the implementation of Invitational Education in the case study school from the stake holders of the school, the community and related

educational bodies. Chapter 6 strives to identify the significance of the study participants' personal accounts on their school experiences in the case study school with reference to Invitational Education; describe and analyze how Invitational Education was implemented in the school and discuss how it might have influenced the motivational dimensions of ALAs. The final chapter discusses the implications drawn from the practice of Invitational Education in the case study school, in particular, the invaluable insights on promoting positive learning environment and student self-concept and it also points out the limitation of the study and recommends future research at the end.

## **1.1 Background to the study**

In Hong Kong, the allocation of secondary school places is based on parents' school choices and students' academic performance, and conducted through a computerized allocation process—Secondary School Places Allocation System. Primary 6 students are divided into 3 allocation bands according to their academic achievement, each consisting of 1/3 of the total number of primary students in the particular school net. The first band encompasses students with high academic achievement and so the third band encompasses ALAs (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2003). Generally speaking, “ALAs are characterised by their weak foundation and low motivation to study. They lack study habits, tend to be passive and have a low-self image of themselves due to low academic attainment” (Education Department, 1994, p. 3). For these reasons, both parents and students regard the band-3 secondary schools as unpopular, which accept intake of a large number of band-3 students, and rate them as a very low priority based on the Secondary School Places Allocation System.

Concerning the ALAs, there are two related studies in Hong Kong context, which throw light on this present study. In the first study, with a view to assessing the quality of schooling in Band 5<sup>1</sup> secondary school, Pang (1999) administered a well-developed questionnaire with a sample of 2460 students from three selected low-band schools. Students' views of the quality of school life and their reactions to school were examined. Findings showed that sense of achievement was not obvious in the students' views of quality of life and sense of opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> Before 2003, primary school students were allocated into five bands based on their academic achievement in primary schools, in other words, band-5 schools accepted students of standard similar to current band-3 students.

In another study, Lam (2003) examined student motivation with a sample of 121 ALAs from two low-band secondary schools and two practical schools, using a self-developed questionnaire. In practical schools, in addition to some core academic subjects, in particular, English, Chinese and Mathematics, they offer some career-oriented subjects such as Electrical Studies, Hairstyling, Gardening and Photography. In the same way, practical schools are considered as unpopular as low-band schools and students in those schools are regarded as less motivated towards schoolwork. They have lost interest in learning and also become frustrated in schooling. The study provides evidence that students in the practical schools were more likely to adopt a learned helpless motivation, accompanied with negative emotion. These students also showed deterioration in their motivation for learning whereas the students in the other two low-band schools tend to exhibit self-worth motive and work avoidance. According to Craske (1988), students who have failed repeatedly despite a lot of effort being devoted to the tasks will gradually become learned helpless and eventually give up trying similar tasks in the future because they do not perceive themselves as capable and their self-esteem will consequently deteriorate. Therefore, Covington (1984) points out that it is of paramount importance for a student to maintain a high self-worth because it is a powerful motivator for students to learn.

The two studies depict a very gloomy picture about ALAs in low-band schools. However, at the end of his study, Pang suggested that promoting the quality of education in low-band schools was imperative. Similarly, Lam recommended that educators should focus on effective teaching strategies to help unmotivated students to learn. All in all, there are still long-awaited solutions to the fulfilment of special needs of the ALAs in Hong Kong educational context.

In Star School, plenty of band-3 students were admitted to the school every academic year and therefore it was considered as an unpopular school. Since 2003-2004 academic year, the school has implemented IE, in collaboration with Hong Kong Education Bureau (HKEB) (*formerly called Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau before 2006*). With inviting philosophy as guiding principles, the school held positive attitudes towards the ALAs and made an attempt to create a harmonious learning environment in the school. The case study school triggered in me a drive to embark upon an investigation into how IE was implemented in a Hong Kong context and how it might influence students' school experiences and motivation for learning. In 2005, I was formally given ethical approval for this study in Star School (*Refer to Appendix 1 for the research proposal for Star School*).

## **1.2 Invitational Education projects in Hong Kong**

The International Alliance for Invitation Education (IAIE) was established in 1982 in the United States by a group of 12 educators and some enthusiastic helping professionals from both the United States and Canada. The mission of the IAIE is to promote positive change in organizations, enhance individual life-long learning and cultivate the personal and professional growth as well as the satisfaction of educators and allied professionals (Purkey, 2007). Above all, inviting educators believe that students are valuable and they have a natural potential for learning and are eager to learn. Through a whole-school approach, human potential can best be realized by creating and maintaining these five factors: places, policies, processes, programs and people (Purkey & Novak, 1996). A fuller discussion about the doctrine of Invitational Education will be presented in the literature review chapter.

Since 1982, the Alliance membership has been expanding and now grown to over six hundred professionals representing fifteen countries. Since 2001, in Hong Kong, there has been exponential growth in the number of schools, both primary and secondary, implementing IE in collaboration with the IAIE and the HKEB. In 2002-2003, there were only nine schools joining the IE projects. In the following year, nine more schools joined the Alliance membership. In 2004-2005, the membership in Hong Kong soared to thirty-six schools in total.

Some IE project schools that have procured outstanding performance in the implementation of IE are invited to compete for the “Inviting Schools Award” to be awarded by the IAIE, of which the purpose is to recognize schools, districts and universities throughout the world, who can successfully exhibit the philosophy of IE in their local educational context.

Star School has been intaking a large number of band-3 students for years, most of whom experienced frustrations in academic achievement in their primary schools before being admitted to Star school and usually failed to keep up with the stipulated school curriculum and even some had great difficulty in learning. As a result, they were rather reluctant to learn and some of them even caused discipline problems in class.

With a view to catering for the needs of ALAs, Star School participated in the IE Project in 2003-2004. With IE philosophy as guiding principles, the school believed that their students are able to learn and valuable as individuals (Purkey and Novak, 1996) and that the school should make every effort to ensure that every individual

student has a reasonable chance of victory because students who experience repeated success in school are likely to develop positive experiences about themselves (Purkey, 1970).

According to Portfolio of Invitational Education Programmes in Star School, 2003- 2006<sup>1</sup>, the ultimate goal of implementing IE in the school was to alleviate academically competitive atmosphere in the school; at the same time, it aimed to build up students' positive self-concept and enhance general satisfaction in their school life; all in all, facilitate the students to learn to be valuable people and responsible learners. Through a wide variety of inviting strategies, for example, planned heterogeneous pupil group, experiential learning activities such as training camps, project learning, inter-class competitions [both academic and non-academic] and charitable voluntary services for the community, the school aimed to create a positive school culture, harmonious school climate and numerous opportunities of developing individual potentials, and also aimed to elicit warm and caring relationships, positive feelings about the school, a sense of belonging to the school and positive emotions in learning. In turn, all of these components were believed to enhance students' self-concept and motivation for learning.

In February, 2006, the Principal of Star School, Mr Nam ( *a pseudonym*) wrote to David A. Chapman, the Chair of International Alliance of Inviting Award, United States (IAIE), applying for the "Inviting School Award, 2005-2006". In his review of acceptance verification statement, Mr Nam explained what the school had done in the past two years in line with IET and why he thought his school was eligible to apply for the award. The following is the extract of his letter:

*"The seed of Invitational Education germinated favourably in our school in October 2003 and now the flowers have blossomed. Examining the implementation of Invitational Education in our school, the renowned Invitational Education professionals, Dr Kate Asbill, Mr Paul Staker and Ms Martha Stake paid official site visits to our school in April, 2004 and April, 2005 respectively. In their visit reports, both of them commended us that we had been doing so many wonderful things to help students, staff, parents and the community and we were encouraged to move into a greater intentionally inviting stance.*

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<sup>1</sup> The portfolio introduces how the school is implementing Invitational Education and it is submitted to the IAIE for part of the assessment of Inviting School Award.

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*Our goal is to create a school that is instructionally inviting and provide an optimal learning environment to our students. Since the implementation of Invitation Education in our school, much progress has been evident in these two years. Student discipline problems have diminished; student attendance has increased; parent involvement has enhanced; policies have been successfully implemented to help increase student achievement; most of all, the enthusiasm of our teaching staff has been vigorously activated and the quality of teaching has been procured. Everything counts in the creation of an inviting atmosphere”*

### **1.3 Aims and Scope of Research**

The present study is principally an investigation of the nature of school experiences of a sample of Form 3 students in Star School, which has implemented Invitational Education since 2003-2004; and the meanings that the students attach to their school experiences. To be specific about school experiences, the study confines to the examination of the students’ school life events, their feelings about them, their perceptions of the school operation, reaction to learning activities, both formal and experiential, difficulties encountered in learning, attitudes towards school, relationships in school and self-perception of ability and effort and most importantly, how these components might have influenced their school life, in particular, their learning, in the past couple of years. Conducting in-depth interviews, stress will be laid on the analysis of the meanings of their psychosocial experiences from their own standpoints in the natural setting and thus the information obtained can be used to explicate their substantial stories of learning in school.

It is hoped that the richness of the students’ experiences in their own terms proffers a counterweight to the depth of the study. Furthermore, supplementing with the eclectic employment of research tools, namely, participant observations, document review as well as the questionnaires from the study participants and teachers concerned, as an ultimate goal of the study, it is expected to procure a bigger as well as more significant picture about how IE was implemented in Star School and how it might have influenced the motivational dimensions of ALAs.



Regarding the scope of the research, naturalist approach is adopted to study the personal experiences in real, natural setting through experiencing, observing, describing, understanding and analyzing the features of school life in a concrete situation. In nature, the research is both exploratory and evaluative; in other words, it serves a process of exploring the social meanings of the students' school experiences and at the same time it provides an evaluative mechanism on the school operation of IE from the insiders' view of the specific context.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

This study, which focuses particularly on the school experiences of ALAs, is intended to respond to calls in the literature for a new understanding about the nature of school experiences of ALAs in the educational context in which IE was implemented. The following inter-related sets of questions guide this research.

1. In what ways have the school policies and strategies of the case study school in connection with Invitational Education influenced students' school experiences, particularly in their emotions, social relationships, attitude towards their school and learning, sense of belonging, personal aspirations and self-perception of ability and effort? And in what ways have such school experiences facilitated them to learn?
2. In what ways has the case study school developed and implemented its policies and strategies in connection with IE theories? And in what ways have the study participants responded to such policies and strategies?

To address these two inter-related sets of questions, I had to explore the study participants' complicated psychosocial experiences in school and understand the nature of their school experiences and the meanings they attach to their experiences, in particular, their successful and unsuccessful experiences in school. To this end, I chose to study the issues by listening to the study participants' stories in the school in past years, which would be more original, authentic, lively, vivid and interesting. To interpret the study participants' school experiences, self-concept theory, the cornerstone theory of IE as well as motivational theories provide conceptual framework and guide in the analysis of the study.

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To obtain a fuller picture about the implementation of Invitational Education in Star School, I had to gather data from as much source of different kinds as possible, for example, interviews, questionnaires, participant observation and document reviews.

## **1.5 Significance of study**

Those band-3 schools, which very few parents put in the top priority list of their school allocation forms, undoubtedly accept a large number of academically low students. In other words, low-band secondary schools are at a very disadvantageous plight in the atmosphere of elitism. Star School, the research site of the present study, is really the case. At the same time, Lam (2003) and Pang (1999) point out that ALAs in low-band schools perform very low motivation in learning and do not enjoy their school life. Participating in the discussion about ALAs, this thesis examines their motivational problems, in particular, the social motivation factor and investigates their school experiences in a Hong Kong context, where IE is implemented. It is an unprecedented study in relation to this specific context. IE is a theory of practice and its crux of theory basically concerns the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. There is much literature about student motivation as well as IE. Playing a significant role, this study provides substantial and real-life evidence of how inviting strategies were put into practice in the case study school and might have influenced student self-concept and motivation to learn. Beyond question, the findings of the study will shed light on the ways of fulfilling special needs of ALAs and bridge the gap between theories and practices.

Last but not least, the rich and deep qualitative data on personal experiences obtained in such a specific setting being operated with inviting philosophy would form archived data as a basis for secondary analysis in further research concerning any aspects of IE.

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## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter is a review of the literature that attempts to link all the core ideas concerning IE and motivation theories and form a coherent conceptual framework and argument for the research study. The chapter explains the basic philosophy of IE; how IE being applied as a theory of practice in motivation approach, the fundamental assumptions of Invitational Learning, the influence of self-concept on learning, influence of parents and home on learning , influence of schooling on learning, influence of relationship in school and the importance of positive emotions in learning.

#### **2.1 Philosophy of Invitational Education**

Invitational Education Theory (IET) originated and developed from the theoretical perspectives of William Watson Purkey and Betty Siegel at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, United States of America. They successfully established the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) in the early 1980s (Paxton, 2003). The IAIE aims to encourage life-long learning, facilitate positive changes in schools and organizations, nurture personal and professional growth, elicit satisfaction of educators in their workplace, and substantiate the people's lives both personally and professionally (Purkey & Schmidt, 1987).

According to Purkey & Novak (1996), IET states that all human interactions involve both positive and negative signal systems, which bring about different behaviours accordingly. IET is also a self-correcting theory of practice based on the framework of the following scholars: John Dewey's "democratic ethos (1916)", Carl Rogers' "client-centred psychotherapy (1957)", Sidney Jourad's "self-disclosure(1971)", Albert Bandura's "self-efficacy" (1997) and Martin Seligman's "learned optimism (1990)" (Purkey, 2007).

The ultimate goal of IE is to create schools with ethos that facilitates every member of the school to procure success (Novak, 2002). The school climate should also elicit a sense of excitement as well as a sense of satisfaction for both students and staff (Purkey & Strahan, 1992). IET offers a systematic approach to providing

strategies for making both students and staff to experience success in school. Regarding the approach, Purkey and Novak (1996) suggest that teachers and the management should work together on a consistent stance of trust, respect, optimism and intentionality, which form the guiding principles for all school strategies and the whole structure of the organizations should also be built on the foundation of such guiding principles.

The consistent stance of inviting theorists—trust, respect, optimism and intentionality evolved from humanistic views. As an influential humanistic therapist, Rogers (1969) claims that people have a natural potential for learning, are curious about their world, and are eager to learn. However, this intrinsic motivation has been dampened. To remedy this, educators should play an active role as a facilitator to tap the learners' motivation and focus on helping them strive for challenges and maximize their potential. Corey (1986) also notes that IET highly demands similar humanistic qualities from educators, namely, "genuineness, warmth, accurate empathy, respect, and permissiveness, and the communication of these attitudes to clients" (p. 289).

The four principles of IE—respect, trust, optimism and intentionality are discussed below at great length:

### ***Respect***

Amongst the four principles in IE, respect for people is the most important—the belief that people are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Respect in the school means that a classroom should not be a place where people are embarrassed, insulted, humiliated, or subjected to prejudice. Being respected, people are willing to stay, learn and develop in the organization (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

### ***Trust***

Trust is based on the recognition that human beings depend on each other (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). Moreover, the presence of trust in a team or organization encourages collaborative risk-taking and creative problem solving (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Therefore educating should be a collaborative, cooperative activity. With mutual trust, educating and helping process can be

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achieved. The helping process is the product in the making as a result. Relating the process to the product is a way of thinking what you have done along the way affects what you will obtain in the end (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

### ***Optimism***

IE holds a positive perception of human existence: humans possess unexploited potential in all areas and human capacity is infinite (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Embracing the belief that people possess untapped potential in all areas of human endeavour influences the curricula we devise, the policies we implement, the programs we design, the process we encourage, and the physical environment we create (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). In short, everything counts if educators have positive view on learners' potential.

### ***Intentionality***

An invitation can be defined as an intentional act designed to offer something beneficial for consideration (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). Intentionality gives direction and purpose to our decisions and makes action possible. Characterized by the direction and purpose, intentionality enables helping professionals or educators to create and maintain consistently caring and appropriate relationships (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

IE proposes that intentionality is a crucial element in any helping relationship. To maximize the helping effectiveness, intentionality requires a whole-school approach, that is, everyone and everything in schools should serve educational purposes. Through this whole-school approach, "human potential can best be realized by creating and maintaining "places, policies, processes and programs" specifically designed to invite development, and by "people" who are intentionally inviting with themselves and others, personally and professionally (Purkey & Novak, 1996, pp. 3-4)".

When any one of these five P's has elicited positive feelings from people, they can be described as 'invited'. In contrast, whenever any one of these five P's evokes negative feelings in people, they then feel 'disinvited' on that occasion (Paxon, 2003). Whether the comments are intentional or unintentional, any disinviting comments can bring about lasting and devastating suffering to students' self-esteem (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

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## 2.2 Factors of successful Invitational Learning

Added to the four important principles, successful Invitational Learning also involves five factors: places, policies, processes, programs and people. These five “P’s” in combination with other elements of Invitational Learning make up the favourable school ecosystem in which individuals continuously interact, learn and grow and most of all, the five “P’s” offer a paradigm for personal and professional functioning.

### *Places*

“Places” are the sights, the sounds, the smells, the tangible totality that our senses receive (Novak, 2002). Preparing an inviting environment involves creating a clean comfortable safe setting in which people who work in schools feel welcome and at ease (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Everything we do in life is influenced by the physical setting. Once people have the desire to create an inviting physical setting, the environment begins to change (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990).

### *Policies*

“Policies” refer to the guidelines, rules, procedures, codes, directives and so forth that regulate the ongoing functions of organizations and people (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). School rules disclose to people about the principal and the management team. In an inviting school that aims to prepare students and staff to live and work in a fulfilling life in a democratic harmonious community, more and more people should be involved in formulating, implementing and evaluating the mission statement and school policies of the schools. Above all, one “policy” that involves everything is “respect”. The ethos of a school as an inviting educative community is positively influenced by school policies that should be viewed as fair, inclusive, democratic and respectful (Novak, 2002).

The “policies” we create, whether they are enforced or unenforced, formal or informal, reasonable or unreasonable convey to people with influential messages of trust or distrust, respect or disrespect, and optimism or pessimism. The school policies such as the school environment, whether intended or unintended, reveal the perceptual orientation of the school management (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

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## ***Processes***

‘Process’ is concerned with the way the other four P’s are operated. To be specific, “ ‘process’ involves observing and improving, in particular, how we did something, and the consequences of what was done, live on in the habits and the memories of those who participated in the process and those who were affected by the product (Novak, 2002, p. 134)”. Educational leaders see how the helping “process” is really the product in the making. “Process” represents not only the content of what is offered, but also the context; similarly, it represents not simply the lyrics, but the melody (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990).

## ***Programs***

“Invitational Learning is the Christmas tree whereas ‘programs’ are the ornaments. Programs have a significant influence on the ways people are treated (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990, p.36)”. The intention of inviting programmes is to facilitate students to obtain more educational lives. The outcomes of the programmes aim to enable students to taste, understand better and learn more from their everyday experiences. An inviting curriculum encourages active and meaningful engagement with others and exploration of the world of knowledge (Novak, 2002). School curriculum and extra-curricular programmes are respectively considered formal and informal programmes. Every community program, for example, voluntary service for students, regardless of how small or large, can elicit positive experience and contribute to the success of Invitational Learning (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990).

## ***People***

Invitational Learning is based on the proper regard for the value of “places, policies, programs and processes”, but “people” should come first and it is the “people” that create and maintain Invitational Learning (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). “If each of the P’s can be thought of a finger, “people” are the thumb that can point up or down. It is the “people” who have to find identify and fulfillment through their engagement in schools (Novak, 2002, p. 132)”. As IE practitioners, it is important to convey inviting messages, explicitly showing clients and students that they will not give them up. Teachers will give what they have and expect positive results from them. It is quite easy to differentiate disinventing teachers from inviting teachers on the basis of their perceptions of themselves, others and the world because the ‘disinventing

teachers' tend to see people as unable rather than able, unfriendly rather than friendly, unworthy rather than worthy as the inviting teachers to tend to be (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

Successful inviting educational leadership depends on how people create, sustain and enjoy positive interpersonal relationships (Novak, 2002). IE is a cooperative, collaborative activity that involves the participation of the "people" in the organization (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

Using the five P's as a guide, teachers, social workers, counselors, nurses and other professional helpers can create an optimally inviting school ecosystem for themselves and for those with whom they work. It is desirable that the five factors of "people, places, policies, programs and processes" can be operated intentionally inviting with a view to creating a totally favourable environment in which every member of the school is enthusiastically invited to develop themselves intellectually, socially, physically, psychologically and spiritually (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

### **2.3 Invitational Education as a motivational approach**

IE develops from different motivation theories and involves essential constructs of traditional motivation theoretical perspectives such as 'force or energy', 'aim', 'outcome', 'effort', 'expectation' and 'needs'. Most of all, IE is characterized by its level of practicality. To obtain an in-depth understanding of theoretical basis of IE, it is conducive to explaining how it evolves from major traditional motivation theories and approaches and how IE can develop its characteristics as a theory of practice in motivation.

#### **2.3.1 Major traditional motivation theories and approaches**

Teachers are very keen to know why students choose to work on one task; why some students work longer and with greater effort and interest on one task than on another and why some students give up working after a short time. To answer the question, Covington & Teel (1996) state that preference, energy level, and effort made all depend on the human motivation.

Over the last century, educational psychologists have proposed several theoretical models of human motivation and each of them have contributed some important perspectives to the understanding of human motivation. The term 'motivation' was used to depict variations in the energy and direction of individual's behaviour and the



earliest theories of motivation assume that the forces that give energy and direction to human behaviour are beyond human control (Borich & Tombari, 1997). Although the approach used to study motivation has become more diverse and comprehensive, its definitions are still uniform. As a very simple concept, according to Latin, 'motivation' means the verb "move", which elicits a force that makes people do something. It is a process that involves forces or energy, aim or purpose that instigate people to sustain goal-directed actions (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Borich & Tombari, 1997). Weiner (1992) regards motivation as the "study of the determination of thought and action" (p. 17). He also points out that motivation theories mainly involve three main streams and approaches: mechanistic perspectives, expectancy-value approaches and attributional theories.

The mechanistic perspective was developed as the foundation of the most motivation studies and they are the earliest research and studies on motivation. The basic assumption of the mechanistic perspective is that communication events comprise causal relationships. For example, a person knows if he makes the effort in accomplishing an action "A", an outcome "Y" will finally occur to him. Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Hull's drive theory are considered to be the mechanistic perspective. Freud believes that human behaviour is driven by an instinctual moving force and states that instincts are neither conscious nor predetermined. They exist to fulfill biological needs and create a particular psychic force or energy within people (Borich & Tombari, 1997). Hull is the psychologist who identified drive theory (Hull, 1943). Hull's drive theory believes that motivation is determined by primary drive and acquired drive. A primary drive is triggered by biological needs such as hunger and an acquired drive refers to the desires for money, for love, to play sports, to write or to create music. All these desires are affected by frustration, anxiety, conflict and despair. Drives theorist would explain the desire to succeed at schoolwork as an acquired drive. The drive theory of motivation provides the foundation for behavioural learning theory unlike instinct theory, still has its proponents. After Freud, a number of theories of motivation arose (Borich & Tombari, 1997).

On discussing the expectancy value theory, Atman et al. (1985) point out that a person may have a stronger desire to accomplish a task when he can anticipate something successful or positive about it. For instance, a sales representative works much harder because he believes that working hard will help him boost his sales in return. Modern expectancy value theories were derived from Atkinson's concept of motivation (1974), which was the most influential advance on the early drive theories. The theory states that achievement behaviours are determined by achievement motives, expectancies for success, and incentive values. Atkinson defines expectancies for

success as the person's expected probability for success on a particular task, a value that extends from null to one. He elaborates that incentive value is the relative attractiveness of accomplishing a given task, and also points out that incentive value is inversely related to the probability for success. According to Galloway et al. (1998), based on the theory, it can be predicted that a person may tend to choose tasks of an intermediate difficulty level most attractive if he would like to procure definite success because the task of that type may offer him a reasonable chance of success and give him an adorable value; at the same time, they are not too easy for them.

The constructs of "achievement motives", "expectances for success" and "incentive values" have similarities with those in the attributional theories. Attributional theories and research have indicated that the stability dimension is concerned with expectancy for success (Wiener, 1986). For example, a student who thinks he is weak at Mathematics although he has obtained good marks in it tends to have low expectations for success. Weiner's attributional approach is based on the assumption that humans are motivated to procure a causal understanding about the world—'why' an event has happened to them. Possible attributions to events can't be predicted but attributions can be associated with three causal dimensions: stability, locus and control. "Stability" is considered how stable an attribution is as time goes; "locus" refers to whether the cause of the event is perceived by the person as internal or external; and "control" refers to whether it is treated as controllable or uncontrollable (Wiener, 1992).

According to Pintrich and Schunk (1996), attributions themselves are not so significant as attributional feedback and effort feedback, both of which create a psychological force to influence learners' expectation for success, self efficacy, and effort or persistence. The role of 'effort' is emphasized in the effort feedback and it encourages more hard work in turn. On the other hand, it can be predicted that when students are often blamed that they lack the ability to perform well, they will give up readily because this attributional feedback, which focuses on their ability rather their effort contributed to the tasks, has brought upon a negative motivational effect that discourages learning.

On elaborating attributions, Weiner (1985) identifies four causes for success and failure: effort, ability, luck and task difficulty.

"Effort" is both internal and individually controllable; on the other hand, "ability" can be relied on to help learners envisage future challenges and learners have a strong desire for competence and will feel proud of it (Lumsden, 1999). High locus

of control is an important predictor of a student's academic achievement. With high locus of control, they are able to encounter challenges positively (Slavin, 1997). On the other hand, failure-accepting students think that failure is a sign of lack of ability or skill and this belief reflects their lack of ability (Covington, 1984).

"Luck" indicates that there is no control for the learners themselves, therefore they neither ascribe the success to their effort nor procure satisfaction from it. "Task difficulty" implies that whatever successful or not, learners will feel neither proud nor competent because the outcome is only due to external factors. Students who perceive their success as being lucky or due to easy tasks are not certain if they can overcome their challenges in the future. In short, different perceptions of students about the causes for their successes and failures make a big difference in their achievement performance (Lumsden, 1999).

In addition to the above theoretical perspectives on motivation, Abraham Maslow's theory of personality (1954), which provides vivid descriptions about many realities of personal experiences, is quite influential in education because of its practicality. The theory evolved from arousal theory and trait theory. Arousal theorists contend that motivation is construed as emotional arousal, affective processes and thus it is neither behaviour nor cognitive. On the other hand, the trait theories state that all individuals are evolving and striving towards actualization or completeness.

Maslow (1954) identifies a hierarchy of five human needs: physiological needs (sleep, thirst), safety needs (freedom from danger and anxiety), love or affiliative needs (acceptance from parents, teachers and peers), esteem needs (confidence in one's ability) and the needs for self-actualization (creative self self-expression). All of his basic needs are instinctual, pertaining to animals' instincts. The hierarchic theory can be represented as a pyramid, with the larger, lower levels representing the lower needs, and the upper level representing the need for self-actualization. The human needs must be satisfied in the order given. In satisfying the levels of the five basic needs, the person cannot feel the second need until the elements of the first level of need have been fulfilled, nor the third until the second has been satisfied. Basically, upper level needs do not evoke themselves and are still hidden and unclear to the person until the lower level needs have been met. This may bring about a corollary that a hungry person will focus his attention on food rather than safety, esteem, or actualization because he has not satisfied his physiological needs at the lowest level. Relating the theory to school learning, Brophy (1987) reminds us that in order to motivate our students to learn successfully, we should address their needs of lower level along with their higher needs that are associated with learning in school.

### **2.3.2 Towards a theory of practice in motivation**

Maslow (1954) affirms a person's desire to develop to his full potential. When inspired, students are motivated to engage with the subjects and to learn. In the same way, IE theorists also believe that human beings possess an intrinsic motivation and inner resource to explore themselves and achieve their goals. Furthermore, they are curious about their world and eager to learn (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1969; Purkey & Novak, 1996 ; Novak, 2002 ).

According to Maslow (1954), the only reason that people do not proceed towards self-actualization smoothly is due to the hindrances that are laid in their way by society. He also points out that education is one of these hindrances. Purkey & Novak (1996) add that with a view to removing the hindrances from the way towards self-actualization, IE practitioners should make a concerted effort to create a positive learning environment and climate, in which people want to stay and in which they are keen to learn. They assume motivation is a force that comes from within the students. Rather than spending energy trying to motivate students, teachers should contrive clever ways to invite students to explore the world of knowledge and imaginative possibilities. These invitations to learning are most probably accepted and acted up when students perceive that they can contribute to their own positive regard (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

IE focuses on all the forces that are intended to satisfy the Maslow's basic physiological needs and create and maintain a safe, inviting environment and a sense of community for everyone in the organization to experience success, care, love, harmony and joy through creating and maintaining the five powerful factors as discussed earlier. "Places, policies, processes and programs" are particularly designed to facilitate professional development in the settings, and "people" are intentionally inviting with themselves and other people within the institutions, personally and professionally. In IE, teachers, or 'people' in the terminology of inviting theory, are considered one of the powerful motivation activators who are equipped with positive perceptions on their students and consistent behaviour framework. As a motivation activator, teachers should perceive students as valuable, see students as responsible, view oneself positively and perceive education affirmatively. Most importantly, teachers should maintain a consistent behaviour framework; in other words, teachers should exhibit a consistent stance, which is built around four assumptions: trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality. Exhibiting such a consistent good stance in all educational settings, teachers can create personal and professional relationships that encourage the realization of human potential (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

IE practitioners also emphasize the fulfillment of human's instinctual desire to procure "success, achievement, relatedness, joy, physiological needs, safety needs, affiliative needs, esteem needs and the needs for self-actualization", which are essential constructs of traditional motivation theoretical perspectives, in particular, mechanistic perspectives, expectancy-value approaches, attributional theories and Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. In addition to the IE's convergence on the constructs of most traditional motivation theories, the IE tenet has developed its own characteristics of a motivational approach on the basis of two important fundamental theoretical perspectives: "the perceptual tradition and self-concept theory". (*These theories will be discussed at great length in Section 2.4*). IE develops from major traditional motivation theories and extends to a theory of practice in motivation with the support of the following core elements: first, two theoretical perspectives as fundamental assumptions; second, the inviting educators' maintenance of the consistent stance—"trust, respect, optimism, and third, intentionality" as educators' behaviour framework, and fourth, the creation of five powerful P's (i.e. "place", "policies", "programme", "process" and "people") in the organizations. The following Purkey's & Novak's (1996) phrases are used to highlight the importance of these elements: "To be optimally inviting to oneself and others, IE practitioners require an understanding of the perceptual tradition and self-concept theory and need to apply this understanding in actual situations involving people" (39).

## **2.4 Foundations of Invitational Learning—"the perceptual tradition and self-concept theory"**

Any approach to education is based on certain assumptions about what people are like and what they might become (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Invitational approach originates and develops from two cornerstone assumptions: the perceptual tradition and self-concept theory (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990; Purkey & Novak, 1996). The assumptions explain how people are affected by themselves and the external world.

### **2.4.1 The Perceptual tradition**

The perceptual tradition states that "people behave according to how they perceive themselves, others, and the situations in which they are involved; that these perceptions are learned; and that they can be reflected upon (Purkey & Novak, 1996, p.24)". The perceptual tradition also emphasizes that people need to be understood according to how things seem to them (Novak, 2002). Since the perceptual tradition

maintains that people behave in the ways they perceive themselves, things and situations, healthy human development is therefore enhanced when they can understand the nature of their perceptions (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990 & Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Because of the perceptualist's emphasis on the healthy human development, IE has its root on an understanding of, and respect for, individuals' perceptual worlds and the ability to examine one's perceptions is of vital importance to IE. Inviting educationists believe that although people cannot change the past, they can change their perceptions of previous events and these perceptions consequently open more possibilities for them in the future. They also believe that each person's perceptual world can be continually substantiated, expanded, and changed. Without such a positive belief in human development, IE will be very limited when it is put into practice (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

According to inviting philosophy, with positive perception on students, teachers should consider them able, valuable and hopeful and thus students will feel encouraged and more positive about themselves and finally become more proactive in learning. Conversely, students will feel discouraged and they will give up learning easily. Students are highly sensitive to the behaviour and attitude of others toward them, and their feelings can remain undermined for a long time, resulting in a downward spiraling effect on self-regard (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Perceptual tradition is really the 'eyes' and 'heart' of educators.

#### **2.4.2 Self-concept theory**

Psychologists have become more aware that all the perceptions we encounter in our life experiences are concerned with our own personal existence. Purkey & Siegel (2003) explain this paramount perception of personal existence as the self-concept and Purkey & Novak (1996) describe this vital perception for each individual as "a person's view of who one is and how one fits the world (p.25)". On the other hand, Fromm (1956) considers the perception as life being aware of itself.

Self-concept theory has played an important role in the development of many human personality theories and the theory serves the basis for many educational programmes (Purkey & Novak, 1996). According to Purkey & Schmidt (1990), "Self-concept is defined as a learned, organized, and active system of subjective beliefs that an individual holds to be true regarding his or her own personal experience (p.14)". From Rogers' humanistic perspective, "the self is the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment. Rogers describes the self as a social product, developing out of interpersonal relationships and striving for consistency. He maintains that there is a basic human need for positive regard both from others and

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from oneself (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990, p. 16)". Similarly, from an inviting perspective, Purkey and Novak (1996) also claim that "the ingredients of self-concept are primarily social, obtained through countless interactions with people, places, policies, programmes, and process. As a way of interpreting oneself, each individual attributes meaning to the acts of others (p.26)".

"Self-concept serves as a perpetual filter and guides the direction of behaviour" and it also "serves as the reference point, or anchoring perception, for behaviour (Purkey and Novak, 1996, p.31)". Because of its influence on human motivation and behaviour, self-concept is a moderator variable and it influences the direction behaviour takes. When a person has learned to see oneself as able, worth, and responsible, he behaves in positive ways. On the contrary, when individuals are in doubt about their self-image as able, valuable, and responsible people, they tend to engage in different self-defeating behaviours (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). Social learning theory also shares a similar view that people whose positive self-concept leads them to believe they will succeed at accomplishing a task are likely to behave in ways that finally lead to success, while those who anticipate possible failures will be reluctant to make greater effort to perform the tasks as assigned (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Therefore, from an inviting perspective, teachers can assist their children to overcome fear of failure by combating these negative expectations through the use of encouragement and changing their perception on environment. The teacher should help the student to realize that he has positive resources and talents (Dinkmeyer & Losoney, 1980).

As Purkey & Schmidt (1990) note, "self-concept has at least three major qualities of importance to professional helpers: (1) it is learned, (2) it is organized, and (3) it is dynamic" (p. 15).

### ***Self-concept is learned***

Self-concept is not instinctive and therefore no one is born with a self-concept. It gradually develops from childhood, adulthood, the families, schools and daily interactions with people. Therefore, it is a social product developed through experience of encountering different kinds of people. The self-concept of a person is heavily influenced by how it is treated during human contacts. It is then shaped and reshaped through repeated perceived experiences and encounters with different kinds of people, particularly with significant others, in particular, parents and teachers. There exists relatively untapped and unlimited potential in an individual for development and actualization. Because of previous experiences and present perceptions, individuals may perceive themselves in ways different from the ways

others see them (Purkey, 1988). They may interpret the messages and perceive the meanings from people's voice, gesture and words, which will affect their feelings and behaviour. "This is particularly true in schools, where inviting or disinviting messages can be recognized in every aspect of school life" (Purkey & Novak, 1996, p. 27). Self-concept is not only learnt but also taught. To be successful, people need to know how to and have a strong sense of self, healthy personal qualities (Radd, 2003). Once has a self-concept been learnt or taught, whether positive or negative, it anchors in part of a person's personalities and guides all his future behaviour.

### ***Self-concept is organized***

It is believed that "self-concept has a generally stable quality that is characterized by orderliness and harmony (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990, p. 18)". The tendency toward internal organization appears to be a necessary feature of human personality so that consistence to the personalities can be anchored. The self-concept of a mentally healthy person is consistent with his thoughts, experiences, and behavior. With the presence of consistence, the individual's entire being is provided with internal balance, a sense of direction, and a feeling of stability (Purkey, 1988). Self-concept is prone to resist change. If self-concept changes quickly, the individual will lose a consistent and dependable personality. The more central an individual holds his particular belief to his self-concept, the more resistant he will be likely to accept the change of that belief (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). Although self-concepts tend toward consistence, it is still possible to change a person's self-concepts because new ideas instills into the self-concept throughout life experiences while some old ideas gradually disappear at the same time. "This continuous process creates flexibility in human personality and allows psychological development (Purkey & Novak, 1996, p. 31)".

### ***Self-concept is dynamic***

Self-concept is active in nature and it is like a gyrocompass, which is "a continuously active system that dependably points to the "true north" of a person's perceived existence (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990, p. 17)". This guidance system not only shapes the ways a person views oneself, others, and the world, but it also serves to direct action and enables each person to take a consistent "stance" in life. Self-concept development is a continuous process (Purkey, 1988). A poor self-concept can be traced back to an early assimilation of negative ideas and attitudes about oneself. (Field, 1993). In a healthy personality, there is constant assimilation of new ideas and attitudes and rejection of old ideas and attitudes throughout life. Individuals tend to strive to protect their self-concepts and they will often sacrifice physical comfort and safety for emotional satisfaction (Purkey, 1988). When a person's self-concept is



distorted, he will be made emotionally disabled and he consequently loses effectiveness and power (Field, 1993).

Having understood the basic qualities of self-concept—it is learned, dynamic, and organized and the contributions of the perceptual tradition are fundamental to IE, educators can realize the importance of creating and maintaining the people, places, policies, programmes and process in schools and organizations, which shape these two perceptions in people involved in the settings— for good or ill (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990).

## **2.5 Self-concept and motivation for learning**

Motivation is the most important components of learning behaviours and it is difficult to measure. Students are motivated by a multitude of factors ranging from the students' personality, belief, value and abilities to characteristics of particular learning tasks, motives for learning, learning environment and teacher influence (Slavin, 1997). This section addresses one of the important factors of motivation for learning—the effect of self-concept on student achievement. It is widely understood that students' evaluation about their abilities is highly correlated with their level of academic achievement (Eshel & Klein, 1981; Byrne, 1984; Chapman, 1988; Harper & Purkey, 1993; Hoge & Renzuli, 1993). Moreover, students' expectations in their academic achievement are positively related to their self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy and beliefs in success and failure, which are indispensable constructs to invitational approach and other approaches to student motivation that lay special emphasis on the self-concept theory as well as the perception tradition (Purkey & Strahan, 1986; Purkey & Schmidt, 1990; Purkey & Stanley, 1994; Purkey & Novak, 1996).

On understanding one's self-concept, which is a holistic view on one's self, it is always useful to probe into smaller parts of self, in particular, an individual's perceptions on strengths, weaknesses, ability, aspirations, personality and temperament, which are mostly involved in how he views himself and judges his own competence and value (Raffini, 1996).

### ***Self-esteem***

“Self-esteem, like self-worth or self-value, refers to the judgement of merit or value that an individual places on the various facets of the self” (Raffini, 1996, p. 9). Self-concept is different from self-esteem because self-esteem refers to the feelings of how important and satisfied he has imposed on himself (Purkey, 1988). In other words, when a person's self-esteem is high, he feels good about himself and he feels he can

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control his life. He thus becomes more flexible and resourceful. Most importantly, he feels powerful and creative and he knows how to make things happen in his life (Field, 1993). One of the main factors making humans and other animals distinctive is “their awareness of self: the ability to form an identity and then attach a value to it” (McKay & Fanning, 2000, p.1).

In educational settings, a powerful motivator for students to learn is their desire to maintain a high self-esteem (Covington, 1984). They also wish to increase and protect their self-esteem by seeking experiences that generate feelings of pride and success and avoiding unpleasant experiences that cause them to feel valueless (Raffini, 1996).

Students, who have failed repeatedly despite incessant efforts put into the tasks and finally become learned helplessness, will give up trying similar tasks in the future because they do not see themselves as capable and their self-esteem will consequently deteriorate (Craske, 1988). Beyond question, less able students are more likely to avoid and minimize failure by employing maladaptive strategies, for example, procrastinating, cheating, avoiding difficult tasks, setting unreasonable goals for themselves. Through these strategies, they can preserve a sense of competence and self-worth. They believe that if they contribute minimal effort, and they fail, the feeling of inferiority and shame they experience will be reduced to the minimum (Lumsden, 1999).

### ***Self-worth***

“Human beings need to experience themselves as valuable, as having significance and worth (Lumsden, 1999, p. 20)”. As Covington’s self-worth theory states, students have a basic desire to preserve positive self-worth and consider themselves as capable and competent. Students perceive academic achievement as an indispensable element to the preservation of self-worth (Covington, 1984). Students internalize subtle messages that “good students” refers high achievers whereas “poor students” means academically low achievers to them (Lumsden, 1999). To this end, students find it important to avoid failure whenever possible since failure carries with the implication of being incapable (Craske, 1988).

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### ***Self-perceptions of ability and competence***

Self-efficacy plays an important role in both motivation and achievement, especially regarding learning and self-efficacy refers to the perception of one's own ability and competence. This is an important construct in motivation theories. The theory also introduces another construct "outcome expectations", which means the expected rewards or punishment. Self-efficacy and outcome expectations interact within a person to produce a behaviour with particular feelings attached to it. For example, when a person with high self-efficacy has very low outcome expectations, he then tends to make complaints and exhibit behaviours of dissatisfaction; on the other hand, when a person with low self-efficacy has set high outcome expectations, he then evokes self-devaluation on himself and suffers from depression (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

In addition to students' self-perception of ability and competence, their belief on success and failure also affects their learning behaviours. The Weiner's attribution theory helps to explain how self-efficacy beliefs arise. Self-esteem appears to be concerned with internal locus control; therefore students will be proud of themselves if they believe that their own efforts have caused a success. They have a strong desire for competence, which is sometimes so intense that they will often persist in the activities although they are difficult and painful (Raffini, 1996). In other words, high locus of control is an important predictor of a student's academic achievement (Slavin, 1997). With high locus of control, they are able to interact effectively with their environment; respond to challenges positively and will choose some tasks with a moderate challenge.

### ***Student belief in success and failure***

"The causes to which students attribute their success and failures are another piece of the complex puzzle of motivation (Lumsden, 1999, p.23)". Different perceptions of students about the causes for their successes and failures make a big difference in their achievement performance.

Young children do not usually obtain a clear distinction between effort and success. They naturally think that learning equates their ability to learn, and all of them tend to preserve a positive feeling on their ability to accomplish tasks in the future. When children grow up and become more mature, they will change their beliefs about effort and ability, success and failure accordingly (Lumsden, 1999).

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Some schools and classrooms promote competition among students and different levels in the school policies or programmes rather than cooperation. As a result, students are deprived of a sense of competence after persistent and repeated efforts toward mastery of an activity (Lumsden, 1999). A harsh, competitive learning environment may finally bring upon students to evoke learned helplessness after their repeated failures (Au, 1995). Students of learned helplessness style are in full conviction that they are stupid and whatever they do, they are doomed to failure or ineffectuality. This motivational style pertains to an internal, stable explanation for failure (Weiner, 1986). Galloway et al., (1996) supplement that students with these two maladaptive motivational styles—learned helplessness and self-worth motivation are always affected by their own self-defeating response to tasks.

### ***Aspirations and self-esteem***

Motivation is what gets you going, keeps you going, and determines where you are trying to go (Slavin, 1997). Likewise, student aspirations indicate what students have been striving for. Aspirations may exhibit high esteem in oneself and can reflect whether students are learning-oriented or performance-oriented (Reasoner, 1982). IE practitioners find it important for teachers to understand what students are seeking from school. Are they questing after knowledge or merely pursuing a qualification? In such a competitive examination-oriented education system, schools should help students shift to be more learning-oriented from performance-oriented through the implementation of effective formal and informal programmes in school.

## **2.6 Influence of parents and home**

IE practitioners do value the role of parents in student motivation because “people” is the most important among the five motivation factors (i.e. People, Programme, Policies, Process and Place) in the tenets of IE. In fact, children’s homes, “place” as in IE terminology, are also a reflection of the respect, trust, optimism and intentionality of the parents as well as family members who live there (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

Helping children to grow up with strong self-concept is the most important task of parents at home (Mckay & Fanning, 2000). According to inviting philosophy, parents exert the strongest influence on how children feel about themselves. It is the parents who guide their children to perceive themselves as competent or incompetent,

stupid or smart, effective or helpless, worthless or lovable (Purkey and Novak, 1996; McKay & Fanning, 2000). At the same time, when parents instill their children with inviting messages, in particular, a positive sense of self-worth, ability and competence, they will positively influence their attitudes toward learning (Lumsden, 1999).

It should also be added that the children, who have grown with good self-esteem in the home during childhood, can stand the best chance of having a happy and successful adulthood. "Self-esteem is the armour that protects children from the dragons of life: drugs, alcohol, unhealthy relationships, and delinquency (McKay & Fanning, 2000, p. 309)". Children who feel that they can be really understood and cared by their parents are more able to envisage reality. If parents can accept all of their children, the good and the bad, their children can accept themselves in turn. This is the cornerstone of creating a good self-esteem (McKay & Fanning, 2000).

In addition to cultivating children's strong self-concept in the home, parents play a crucial, enduring role in nurturing their children's attitude towards learning. When parents cater for their children's instinctive curiosity about their world by answering their questions without hesitation, enthusiastically encouraging them to explore their world, inspiring their thought and making whatever resources that can be used to widen their horizons, their motivation will undoubtedly be enhanced because of parents' positive attitude and unremitting encouragement (Lumsden, 1999). Through parents' continuous inviting messages in their childhood, they can learn to praise themselves and to recognize and value their own efforts and talents (McKay & Fanning, 2000). Moreover, parents who had good and pleasant educational experience when they were young and treasure formal education are prone to appreciate their children's schoolwork and efforts made by teachers. Conversely, if parents are consistently unresponsive, impatient or apathetic, their children's natural enthusiasm in learning will more likely to decline (Lumsden, 1999).

When a child tries something new and faces a challenge successfully, his self-esteem grows. Parents can help their children develop their courage to try new experience by providing these four conditions:

"Let a child know what to expect. Let your child practise the necessary skills. Be patient. Make it safe to fail (McKay & Fanning, 2000, p. 309)."

## **2.7 Influence of schooling**

Students with learning difficulties, by definition, are students who have experiences problems in learning and consequently academic failure (Chan & Lee, 1993). Poor academic results, disapproval from teachers, complaints from parents and even social ostracism are the painful burdens that they suffer. Children's self-esteem can be beaten and undermined as they fall further behind (Mckay & Fanning, 2000).

At school, pupils develop a sense of self-worth through the recognition of peers and teachers and their success at academic achievement or non-academic school programmes. Nonetheless, lower attainers, especially those with learning difficulties, often fail to procure academic success and thus turn to seek support from their peers through their misbehaviours (Montgomery, 1998). They might give up trying because they do not see themselves as capable of success (Craske, 1988). Those students adopt a self-worth motive to maintain a self-concept of high ability by not trying. They may develop a belief that they cannot control their outcome at school. Their unhappy school experience will contribute to their feelings that they lack, ability, together with a feeling of shame (Craske, 1988). Students will develop learner helplessness gradually as a result. This is a maladaptive motivational style, which prevents pupils from making the most of whatever talents they possess (Dweck, 1986). In reality, many students play truant because they feel disappointed with their academic performance in school, which does not elicit positive emotion at all but threatens their sense of self-worth (Raffini, 1996).

The students who are ignored and allowed to continue to perform very badly in their schoolwork encounter everyday painful assaults on their esteem. Studies in Hong Kong with Chinese children and adolescents who had poor self-esteem or perceived themselves to be comparatively incapable in both academic and social domains have also shown that these students and adolescents could be particularly at risk for depression and other emotional problems (Chan & Lee, 1993).

## **2.8 Promoting feeling of success and positive emotion through school programmes**

To learn successfully in school, it is vitally important that students can procure sufficient confidence in themselves and their abilities to make attempts and some effort to succeed. Self-regard and efforts to control one's destiny or achieve goals are highly correlated. Without self-confidence in learning, students easily yield to apathy, dependency, and loss of self-control (Purkey, 1970).

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When students with learning difficulties and normal achieving students were compared, they did not show much significant difference in their non-academic self-concept domains, for example social and physical (Winnie, et al., 1982; Chovan & Morrison, 1984; Montgomery, 1994). Assuming that students with learning difficulties can perform differently in different domains of competence, it may be implied that knowing these students' perceived inadequacies in specific domains of competence may encourage schools to develop effective school policies and programmes in order to enhance students' self-esteem and promote emotional well-being and subsequently their academic achievement can be improved (Chan & Lee, 1993). In the light of the above arguments, IE practitioners emphasize the provision of ample opportunities of learning for students in school through another 'P (programme)'—both academic and non-academic programmes so that students can maximize their different untapped potential and experience success and joy in school.

Both caring and high expectations are essential elements that must be present in schools seeking to elicit proactive attitude towards learning. When students can sense sincerely being cared about, they will persist longer in challenging tasks. IE practitioners often convey positive, inviting messages to students through the five powerful P's of IE that teachers will see them as valuable and able to learn and never give them up whereas they should not give themselves up (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). It is also important to note that the harder children try, the more likely they will succeed. The more they believe they will succeed; the harder they will try. IE employs this effort-outcome linkage that encourages unremitting attempts and develops positive views about the world (Good & Brophy, 1977).

In school, reasonable grades not only enhance feeling of success but also support self-esteem. When children see stars and smiling faces at the top of their homework papers, and their teachers are pleased and friendly towards him, and that other children see them as competent, beyond question, they lead a happy school life rather than sustaining years of frustration in their schoolwork (Mckay & Fanning, 2000).

The inviting school climate creates a classroom rich in dialogue and cooperative learning strategies. Students are better prepared to handle anxiety and stress within a learning environment and feel safe to ask for help when needed in such an inviting environment (Radd, 2003). In addition to cooperative learning, experiential learning can also help maximize student potential. Montgonmery (1998) points out that students in schools are always passive in the learning process; however, learning will become more effective and successful if they are direct participants in the process of experiential learning. Experiential learning, which involves learning by doing or

action learning, can also maximize student potential for learning. On the other hand, Raffini (1996) notes that learners are prone to favour school programmes that provide physical, social, cognitive, or psychological pleasure. Active and interesting learning sessions, which can generate involvement and fun, will enhance student intrinsic motivation.

## **2.9 Satisfying the need for self-determination**

Cooperative learning, experiential learning and interesting learning programmes are major considerations when planning school programmes (Raffini, 1996). Taking inviting approach, another 'P' — 'policies' can also support learning programmes and democracy is reflected in school policies (Novak, 2002). When school policies allow students to choose what they like to learn, not because they have to, they are more likely to engage in learning programmes. When students' need for a sense of autonomy or self-determination is satisfied at school, their intrinsic motivation to learn in the classroom will become significant. Learning to make choices also leads to commitment, and in turn, it is commitment that leads to responsibility. In contrast, when students lose their sense of self-determination and the need for autonomy, enthusiasm to learn will wane (Raffini, 1996).

## **2.10 Influence of relationships in school**

ALAs may perceive their failure as a depressing consequence of their low ability and self-esteem and therefore their incentive to work decreases (Cooper, 1984). The more difficult and disruptive the behaviour is, the lower the sense of self-esteem has been found to be (Wilson & Evans, 1980). Nevertheless, intimate relationships promote mutual support and fulfillment, and facilitate positive personal growth and development within the organization (Howe, 2002). Developing positive relationships in school is conducive to not only learning in school but also alleviating disruptive behaviours in class. For all students, especially lower attainers, it is essential that schools become the 'P'—places where it is possible for them to establish reasonable relationships with those who teach them (Montgomery, 1998).

Alderian psychology believes that all humans are social beings with a basic desire to belong to a group and are willing to lend a hand to peers (Raffini, 1996). Having one's being recognized and accepted by peers is a basic psychological need of all students (Maslow, 1954). Students will feel better about themselves and will be more intrinsically motivated and engaged in learning activities when they feel



connected rather than detached from their schoolmates, teachers, and parents (Lumsden, 1999). Achievement is enhanced when friendships within the classroom are extensively promoted and when students are willing to help and support one another (Raffini, 1996). Therefore, to enhance student motivation in a safe inviting learning environment, schools should emphasize cooperation among students rather than competition and help those students who are less socially skilled.

“Place” is a term of inviting theory for the school or organization. The indispensable element in any successful schools or organizations is shared responsibility, which is based on free and substantial dialogues, cooperation, harmony and mutual respect. From the perspective of IE practitioners, relationships in life cannot be successful without the presence of respect, trust, genuineness for the integrity of the people involved in an organization (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). In short, the school should be the place in which students and the staff of the school are keen to learn, stay, work and grow.

## **2.11 How good are positive emotions?**

According to Purkery and Novak (1996), an inviting school is the one where students feel secure, respected, cared, supported and encouraged. In other words, an inviting school should first and foremost fulfill the Maslow’s basic psychological needs and facilitate students to experience happiness, care, success, harmony and positive emotions in schools. Oatley & Jenkins (1996) note that “love and happiness is the emotions of cooperation (p. 286)” and the “emotions of being threatened by power are those of fear and anxiety (p.287)”. On the other hand, Fredickson (1998) identifies four different positive emotions: joy, interest, contentment, and love, which are important to learning.

Joy is often used to replace with happiness, which evokes a motive to explore, invent and play around. Moreover, joy can help individuals build up physical, intellectual, and social skills (Fredickson, 1998).

Interest is sometimes used interchangeably with curiosity, intrigue, excitement, or wonder. Because of intrinsic incentive, students explore the things or knowledge that they are keen to learn, satisfying their instinctive curiosity. It is obvious that exploring knowledge with fun enhances the learner’s capacity of knowledge in an instinctive way (Fredickson, 1998).

Contentment elicits a feeling of tranquility or serenity, which follows experiences of having successfully accomplished the tasks assigned. Consequently, this emotion of feeling satisfied leads individuals to recollect their current life circumstances and memorable successes. In short, contentment enriches their personal resources, which facilitate them to encounter future challenges (Fredrickson, 1998).

People experience different kinds of love for example, romantic or passionate love, companionate love, caregiver love, and attachment to caregivers. Amongst the other three, love is the most important emotion because love experiences can subsequently evoke the more specific positive emotions—interest, contentment, and joy. After a period of time, the interactions elicited by love can help individuals build and strengthen social bonds and attachment undoubtedly (Fredrickson, 1998).

In sum, love and the various positive emotions experienced in love relationships, that is, interest, joy, and contentment, can build and solidify a learner's social resources.

Beyond question, positive emotions, in particular, love, are conducive to learning activities in schools. An inviting school should implement effective strategies to elicit positive emotions from students as well as promoting self-regard so as to create a positive learning environment.

## **2.12 Issues Concerning Invitational Education**

The application of inviting theory as a motivational approach has been discussed at great length. Nevertheless, there are a couple of issues that inviting educators need to address or they should attend to when they intend to put IE theories into practice.

First and foremost, critics of inviting approach and other self-concept approaches to promoting learning performance point out that there is a lack of empirical data to support the claims that approaches to student instruction, which are developed from self-concept theory, are conducive to effective learning. On the other hand, it was also criticized that analyses used in the studies in relation to self-concept programmes to examine complex relationships between achievement and self-image were too simple (Riner, 2003)

Second, with a view to implementing IE in a comprehensive guidance and counselling programme in school, "all school counselors must become conversant

with the practical application of self-concept and perceptual psychology (McBrien, 1990, p. 61)". However, there involve following issues in connection with the application of IET in school programmes and counseling programme.

The first issue is concerned with the use of "consequence" in IE to serve as a strategy to facilitate the misbehaving students to re-assess the initial purpose of their erring behaviours, the outcome and the impact on others. Through this self-reflection process, it is believed that external control on the erring behaviour can be removed and the students can be led to control and regulate their own behaviour. Regarding the use of 'consequences' to self-regulate erring behaviours, critics argue that its theoretical base still needs further development (Riner, 2003). In fact, with this strategy, students are expected to take responsibility for their own reflection and appropriate behavioural improvement and it is believed that "they can manage themselves, can learn to handle freedom and can become more responsible as they accept more responsibilities (Wilson, 1990, p. 86)". Apparently, students' successful behavioural modification solely depends on teachers' ability to accurately predict the consequences and reflection of misbehaving students' behaviours and therefore there may exist a risk that this 'belief' is manipulated by them.

The second issue is that when IET is put into practice of counseling programme, some counselors felt frustrated because invitational concept were not presented in pragmatic "how to do" strategies of counselling (McBrien, 1990).

Moreover, a major thrust of the school programme or counselling program developed from IET lays emphasis on intentionality (McBrien, 1990). Intentionality gives direction and purpose to our decisions and makes action possible. To maximize the helping effectiveness, intentionality requires a whole-school approach (Purkey & Novak, 1996)". If a programme does not exhibit intentionality while being implemented, it merely comprises a set of meaningless, unplanned activities that have no sense of purpose or direction or lack care, respect and trust (McBrien, 1990).

Finally, successful implementation of IE is really based on a strong commitment to teamwork (Chance, 1990) and the heart of schooling is schooling with an educational heart (Novak, 2002). Moreover, "the goal of educational living as a framework for educational ideals is to increase the educational quality of life not only for students, but for all involved in schools and beyond (Novak, 2002, p. 11)". Obviously, successful operation of IE depends on the 'hearts' of educators and all the people involved in schools, who would create and maintain the five powerful P's in

schools and most importantly, regulate the interactions of these five factors effectively. Similarly, educators' patience is a critical variable if IE is to be accepted (McBrien, 1990). However, educational innovation is difficult, enervating and a long-term continuous process. Successful innovation depends on changing people and providing means of improving eagerness to change (Holye, 1969). Change in other words is a process of learning new ideas and things (Fullan, 1992). School programmes fail or go astray with great potential when the people involved in the programme have not been prepared to accept something new (McBrien, 1990). Learning to change can be regarded as intrinsic motivation of the staff in schools. In other words, failing to convince people involved in the school to change to inviting approach means a failure to IE.

### **2.13 Concluding remark**

People are always motivated; in fact, they are never unmotivated. They may not be motivated to do what we would prefer they do, but it can never be truly said that they are unmotivated. Motivation is a force that comes from within the student. Rather than spending energy trying to motivate students, teachers can exercise their creativity to employ strategies of inviting students to explore the world of knowledge and imaginative possibilities. It is the IE practitioners' full conviction that every person has their abilities, value and responsibilities and everything within the institutions, can contribute their benefits to the lives of students. IE aims to change the whole structure of schools or organizations by building a foundation of principles—respect, trust, optimism and intentionality.

A number of factors affecting student motivation have been discussed in this chapter: students' self-esteem, self-worth, personal aspirations, self-perception of ability and competence, students' belief in success and failure, the influence of parents and home, the influence of schooling, care and high expectation, psychoacademic need of self-determination, influence of relationships in school and positive emotions in school. IE activates all the resources and forces that are intended to satisfy the above factors of motivation so that invitational educators can work in collaboration to develop caring behaviours, nurturing environment, person-centred policies, engaging programs, and democratic processes within the educational institutions. As a result, students can develop their potential in all aspects of valuable human strength and become consistent and indefatigable learners. Such an educational goal can be achieved through creating and maintaining the five powerful factors : “processes, programmes, policies and places”, which are particularly designed to evoke

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development, and by “people” who are intentionally inviting with themselves and others, personally and professionally.

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## Chapter 3

### Research Methodology

#### 3.0 Introduction

One of the objectives of this study is to conduct an in-depth investigation into the school experiences of a group of ALAs in a secondary school in which IE was being implemented. To answer the research questions as stated in Chapter 1, I had to conduct an exploratory study by taking a case-study approach. In this case study, the triangulation of methods was reflected by its use of interviews, questionnaires for students and teachers, participation observations, classroom teaching observations and document review, while the triangulation of sources included 147 Form 3 study participants of the case study school. Out of 147 study participants of the same cohort, 20 informants were screened for three interviews each over six months during the research period—from December, 2005 through June, 2006. The themes of the in-depth interviews mainly concerned the informants' successful or unsuccessful learning experiences, general satisfaction about their school life, their relationships in school and their attitude towards school and learning. Added to in-depth interviews, a number of field observations were conducted in the research site to collect triangulated data about the 147 study participants, which was used to complement what could not be obtained in the in-depth interviews; most importantly, it was used to compare and contrast the in-depth interview data. After collection of data, the analysis of this study started bringing order to the data and naming and labelling things, categories and descriptive units and next proceeded to look for patterned relationships.

In this chapter, I will be explaining why a case study approach was adopted to address the research questions in this particular social setting; describing how the pilot studies contributed to the development of the present study; discussing how the methods of collecting data were triangulated to enhance the reliability of the research; elucidating why it was necessary to interview the informants over six months and. There is also a detailed discussion about the deliberate sampling of the research, both its rationale and procedures. Finally, I discuss in full length how the data were analyzed.

### 3.1 Developing an appropriate research approach through pilot studies

A couple of related studies were referred before the formulation of the research design. In the first study, Pang (1999) administered a well-developed questionnaire with a sample of 2460 low-band secondary students to investigate their views of the quality of school life and their reactions to school. In the second study, Lam (2003) examined student motivation with a sample of 121 ALAs, using a self-developed questionnaire. In view of these two studies, during the planning stage of my pilot studies, there appeared good reasons for me to launch the research through conducting a questionnaire as the best way to gain data which would help cast light on the school experiences of ALAs.

In the preliminary stage of the pilot studies in 2005, the prototype of a 79-item questionnaire was constructed by myself based on motivation theories, which was intended to measure the students' motivational dimensions, in particular, their motivation orientations, school experiences and emotion in school. (*Refer to Appendix 2 for the questionnaire used in the pilot studies*). The questionnaire prototype was respectively pilot-run in two secondary schools with a sample of 100 Form 1 students each in June 2005. The first stage of data analysis generated an optimum reliability coefficient after employing factor analysis of the questionnaire items. To follow up the two pilot studies, a group of respondents of the questionnaire were invited to attend an interview in which I asked them to elaborate why they made their choices on particular items with a view to checking their understanding on those items and most importantly, improving the validity of the questionnaire items. In the pilot study of this type, I discovered that through talking with the respondents face-to-face about the items of the questionnaire; I could really procure more detailed useful information that might shed light on my further research. For example, the respondents could share with me why they felt satisfied with their school life in verbal descriptions, which were quite vivid and lively. This would be rather impossible from the interpretation of questionnaire data. Subsequently, I developed semi-structured interview questions, aiming to explore students' experiences in school in more detail, and pilot-ran them with a sample of 12 respondents. (*Refer to Appendix 3 for the pilot interview questions*). Through these pilot interviews, I could obtain much more substantial data than the questionnaire data and they would also facilitate me to reformulate the in-depth interview guide of the present study. As the result of this pilot study, I could preliminarily depict a blurred picture about the respondents' school experiences. Afterwards, I decided to make a change in the research approach.

### **3.2 Adopting a case study approach to procure direct contact with informants**

In light of the results of the pilot studies, namely, the two pilot-runs of the self-developed questionnaire for student motivation, interviewing the questionnaire respondents about their understanding of the questionnaire items, and the try-out of the semi-structured interview questions, I decided to explore students' learning experiences in the case study school through a more qualitative approach, that is, adopting interviews and field observations rather than solely using questionnaires.

The preparation and the implementation of the pilot studies could afford me much valuable insight for the planning for the research, particularly in the use of the questionnaire. After the pilot-runs of the self-developed questionnaire to address the research questions in the planning stage of the study, several weaknesses of using the questionnaire emerged, because of which I decided to forsake using it in the new research design and began to consider the adoption of a case-study approach with interviewing as a main research tool. The weaknesses are enumerated below:

First of all, on using the deductive method in the design of a questionnaire, the questionnaire designers have already decided to ask respondents in the questionnaires based on particular assumptions and theories. Consequently, the questionnaire designers or theorists' assumptions tend to have guided the research, which put the validity of the investigation into question. Moreover, the questionnaire designers can be queried that how researchers can confidently understand the ways in which people interpret how respondents think and behave; and how the questionnaire designer can make sure that their questions will be understood and interpreted by the respondents in the way that they wished to mean when there is no chance for mutual communication between the questionnaire designer and respondents while the survey is administered (May, 1993).

This study attempts to find highly qualitative information that throws light on the school experiences of underachievers in low-band secondary schools. Nevertheless, it was found that the use of questionnaire in the pilot studies would not yield the rich data that was required to clearly expose the lively and vivid school experiences the students had encountered in past years and they would encounter in the future. The research methods to be employed should enable me to get closer to the social phenomena, thereby facilitating a superior understanding of the meanings of the



students' school experiences. Unlike questionnaires, interviews can elicit a wide range of possible responses from the respondents. On the other hand, in the research site, I wished to be considered as a member of the school, rather than a mere, serious academic person. Building a relationship of trust amongst the respondents was important to my role so that they would feel able to speak freely about their experiences, feelings and their perspectives on educational aspects. Therefore, I decided to choose the in-depth interview as the major tool of the study.

By means of a case study design, I could examine intensively the interaction of factors and events and could also observe the study participants' ongoing behaviours occurred during the research period, by getting into direct contact with the study participants through in-depth interviewing and participant observations in the setting (Brewer, 2000). Bell (1987) also notes that case study methods involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single event or case within a limited schedule and the case-study researcher intends to identify common and unique features of an organization and show how these features influence the implementation of system and influence the way an organization works.

A case study research may be naturalistic in nature. The critical case selected within the specific setting of the present study was: "exploring psychosocial personal school experiences of the Form 3 cohort" in "Star School where IE was being implemented" and it was regarded as the focus on the instance of the phenomena. In this instance, as a researcher, I had to present myself in the field and explore the meanings of the people concerned in some depth within a limited time scale through direct involvement and participation (Brewer, 2000).

In this case study, student academic achievement, in terms of empirical data was not extensively used to explain enhanced student learning procured through the intervention of the Invitational Education programme. The present case study design, which is a non-experimental research, is intended to perform a detailed examination of a single case and involves no experimental groups or control groups as most experimental researches often do. It is not a correlational study either, which "uses a numerical index called correlational coefficient as a measure of the strength of the relationship of variables (Salkind, 2006, p. 11)". Unlike the pre-test and post-test approach, which is concerned with independent variables and dependent variables and of which the test instrument is strictly designed and controlled to gain high reliability of comparative measurement, the case study school could not provide reliable, standardized term examination papers for me to measure and make claims on any changes of the subjects in academic performance because the first and second internal

term papers involved different examination syllabuses at two periods, different marking methods and different difficulty levels. In a word, there existed a number of anticipated, uncontrollable variables affecting the comparison measurement and any correlational claim to be made would thus be put into question if a comparison was performed. Another limitation of correlational design is that “as it [correlational research] measures total change, you cannot ascertain whether independent or extraneous variables are responsible for producing change in the dependent and extraneous variables for other reasons (Kumar, 2005, p. 96)” and “it examines relationships between variables and predictions examines association but not causal relationships, wherein a change in one factor directly influences a change in another (Salkind, 2006, p. 12)”. Despite limited use of comparative data of academic results, other empirical data such as student attendance record, student conduct records and questionnaire data collected for programme evaluations were used to triangulate the data gained through the in-depth interviews.

### **3.3 Case study approach as exploratory and evaluative research**

In 2004-2005, the case study school, in collaboration with the Chinese University of Hong Kong, conducted a survey for the whole school with a view to evaluating the school effectiveness. The survey data collected by the professional personnel of the Chinese University of Hong Kong could provide me with a global picture about the social site, social setting and informants whereas the data in this study could answer the question: what is going on in the school and facilitate me to uncover important social patterns, such as values, concepts and beliefs from the insider’s view of the situation (Dobbert, 1982). Moreover, they could provide me with descriptions and explanations of social phenomena—the implementation of IE in Star School. Therefore, this study is descriptive and exploratory in essence (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

To a certain extent, the present study is also evaluative and it is a focused research, which investigates “the areas in which a great deal is already known and there exists an already identified problem, question, or testable hypothesis. Much, but not all, evaluation research falls into this class” (Dobbert, 1982, p. 52). With the provision of background information of the school, in particular, relevant documents about the goals of Star School and its strategies of inviting approach to nurture underachievers, this study could therefore be launched to investigate how the Form 3 cohort reacted to the school ecosystem being developed and consolidated under the implementation of IE and how their attitude towards the school and their social relationships might have influenced their learning.

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### **3.4 Improving reliability and eliminating threats to validity of study**

According to Hammersley (2004), criticisms made by the positivists are intended for at the qualitative research that case studies usually focus on relatively small numbers of cases; consequently, it poses a threat to external validity of the research and researchers also find it hesitant to make generalizations on the case from the data.

The positivists also emphasize observable facts; at the same time avoid metaphysical speculation about causal relationships. On the other hand, they criticize that qualitative research falls below the standards of social science because it lacks proper scientific measure for it (Brewer, 2000).

As a matter of fact, the research process in the qualitative case study requires careful research design (Brewer, 2000) and various data collection techniques—triangulation would be used to get close to reality in qualitative research (Hammersley, 2004). The use of multiple data source is most advantageous because the approach avoids the reliance on the use a single source of data. The reliability of qualitative research is often improved by triangulation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

With emphasis on triangulation in this study, eclectic employment of different research tools was adopted to compare and contrast the data of common themes collected mainly through interviews and field observations, and supplemented by short questionnaires and review of school documents. For instance, in this study, the individual informants' feedback to their participation in voluntary services, which was discovered through interviews, was compared and contrasted with the questionnaire data administered to the study participants of the same cohort who had also joined the services so that better understanding about the activities could be obtained.

The themes to be explored in the in-depth interviews with the informants were derived from the past relevant studies, the literature based on motivation theories and inviting philosophy as well as the data collected in the pilot studies before the actual research commenced. According to Brewer (2000), collecting very detailed, 'rich' and 'deep' data is really time-consuming and demanding in qualitative research. Therefore, in this study, only a small sample was dealt with during a long period—6 months for this interview project, but the richness of the data could be captured whereas the depth of the study could be procured at the same time, which could remedy the external validity of the case study.

With the aim of increasing the validity of my research, in other words, procuring accurate understanding of the informants' viewpoints, thoughts, intention and experiences, during the interviews, I occasionally checked or confirmed my understanding by repeating the main points to them, which I had just heard from the informants, or reflecting to them how they felt about the incidents they had just mentioned. Spradley (1979) also agrees that repeating and restating are very important to examine the accuracy of interpretation during interviews. Most importantly, all the interviews were audio-taped and informants were invited to check the tape-scripts and asked to feel free to rectify any misunderstood information found and supplement the scripts with more detailed information. Such a way of checking will help increase descriptive and interpretive validity of the study. The idea behind is that the study participants may substantiate or disapprove of my interpretations (Cano, 2005).

Positivism stresses hypothesis-testing and it is concerned about theoretical validity and internal validity of research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Nevertheless, Hammersley & Atkinson precisely pinpoint that naturalism portrays research as a process of exploration. More often, qualitative researchers are concerned with studying and understanding a process rather than identifying possible cause and effect relationships. Regarding this issue, the present study confines the focus to the interpretation of meanings of the informants' school experiences and the study participants' feelings about their school life and thus the validity of this qualitative case study could be remedied.

To sum up this section, the present case study was inductive research, which moved from specific observation to broader generalization and theories. In this study, the methods of collecting data were triangulated, persistent and prolonged. The research project was implemented in the research site across nine months, which allowed me to obtain interview data in three different sessions for each informant and sometimes I could confirm my interpretation procured in the preceding interviews. More importantly, the interview data, if necessary, could also be crosschecked against relevant school documents or questionnaires. Sampling criteria were also well-defined and deliberate, which will be discussed at great length in the next section. The present study was descriptive and exploratory in essence, focusing on the interpretation of meanings of student behaviours and experiences and did not aim for testing hypotheses; therefore, the threat to internal validity can be eliminated from this study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

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### 3.5 Purposive sampling

This case study is “a type of non-probability sampling best called judgment sampling” (Johnson, 1990, p. 28) or “purposive or conscious choice” (p. 10) because informants under study were chosen for the specific reason or purpose—“sharing their school experiences and telling their own stories of learning in Star School”. On the other hand, I had to employ my prior knowledge about the setting, the case and the informants to draw representatives who possessed the following salient characteristics that could fulfill the following requirements of the research:

First, the study participants had emerged in the setting under study, for a couple of years prior to this research, that is, they had to be admitted to Star School in 2003-2004, when IE was embarked in the same school year.

Second, the informants, selected for prospective interviews, were willing to share their positive and negative school experiences with me on their own accord.

Because of the salient criteria for sampling, the validity of information could be maximized (Johnson, 1990). Beyond question, the Form 3 cohort of academic year 2005-2006 fulfilled the first selection criterion because they were admitted to Star School in 2003-2004 and they had experienced IE for two years in the research site.

As mentioned earlier, Star School conducted a school self-evaluation project in September 2004 in collaboration with the Chinese University of Hong Kong, of which the objective was to evaluate school effectiveness. The survey results provided me with additional salient information about the Form 3 cohort. According to the survey in connection with the domains in “students’ sense of achievement in school”, “attitude towards school” and “relationships in school”, the survey results reflected that the Form 3 cohort (*at the time of the school self-evaluation project in 2004, the present Form 3 cohort was in Form 1*) recorded the highest ratings in these domains as compared with the other forms of the school. The data provided in that survey were quite significant and the Form 3 cohort therefore became a critical case within the setting, which was worth a further investigation. To achieve a more focused research goal, it was my strategy to select a critical case for investigation from the known setting because the selection of such a critical case —Form 3 cohort — may be more fruitful (Hamersley & Atkinson, 1983).

### 3.5.1 Selecting informants for interviews

Based on the above salient, deliberate criteria of sampling, the Form 3 cohort was selected for my study. The sample consisted of 147 Form 3 students. Next, adopting an element of quota sampling at the same time, out of 147 study participants in the population of the Form 3 cohort, this investigation would select only 20 informants for interviews, aiming for capturing deeply rich data rather than general invalid information. It is Johnson's suggestion (1990) that a small number of specially chosen informants can yield more valid generalized information than a larger group of general informants.

In addition to the 20 informants who would be invited to attend interviews, the remaining sample (147-20) would still be kept as the study participants of my research and involved in field observations in the research site. It was expected that the field observations could serve as one of the important triangulated methods in collecting data.

Then the project embarked upon the selection of eligible informants for interviews. In December 2005, the 147 study participants were first administered with a self-developed 18-item questionnaire that was specially used to select 20 informants out of the population for my interview project. This questionnaire was modified and shortened, based on the 79-item questionnaire that was used in the pilot studies of the planning stage of the research. The shortened version comprises the following scales, namely, attitude towards school, emotion at school, relationships in school, self-perception of ability and effort, school support and culture and personal aspiration. (*Refer to Appendix 4 for the questionnaire used for sampling*).

As suggested by Johnson (1990), taking into account contrasting cases, that is, "students with positive school experiences and students with negative school experiences" in this investigation, would increase the chances of gaining broader perspectives from the different representatives in the sample and at the same time would facilitate me to identify potential bias from the data collected through interviews. Therefore, the sampling questionnaire I was adopting should facilitate me to select 10 informants who might tend to have positive school experiences whereas 10 informants who might tend to have negative school experiences from the population.

To select 20 eligible informants for in-depth interviews, the scores of the items in each respondent's questionnaire were added up to obtain a total score (*the total score of the questionnaire is 90; 'strongly disagree' – 1 point; 'disagree' – 2 points; 'not sure' – 3 points; 'agree' – 4 points and 'disagree' – 5 points*) and subsequently a list of study participants was generated in the descending order according to the total scores of each respondent's questionnaire, that is, study participants with higher total scores were placed on the top of the list. The scoring of the questionnaire was designed in the way that the higher scores reflected the respondents' tendency towards having positive school experiences whereas the lower scores having the negative school experiences. Therefore the top ten on the list, who might tend to have positive school experiences and the bottom ten, who might tend to have negative school experiences were finally selected, with twenty in total. Two small groups with ten each were thus formed. With reference to Johnson's idea (1990), through these two groups with two experience categories, it was expected that different perspectives on learning, school experiences and attitudes could be elicited in the in-depth interviews; above all, potential bias in the collection of data might be avoided. All in all, the procedures were intended to collect balanced ideas from different informants' personal accounts.

### **3.5.2 Seeking approval from School and obtaining basic Information of informants**

With the help of the sampling questionnaire, 10 informants who might tend to have positive school experience and 10 informants who might tend to have negative school experiences were identified. To seek approval from the administration of Star School, I tendered the preliminary list of interviewees for their comments and approval. The co-ordinator of the Form 3 cohort, Mr Li (*a pseudonym*) was assigned to check the relevant documents of the prospectus interviewees such as their attendance records, conduct records and academic records in order to provide me with substantial background information that might be useful for me to crosscheck the screening results of the 20 informants. Most importantly, the school allowed me to consult their respective class-masters<sup>1</sup> in relation to their general behaviours in school. All these procedures were administered within a limited number of personnel of the school and in strictest confidentiality. With the enthusiastic assistance of the school administration, the selection of 20 prospective informants could be triangulated to a certain extent. Finally, letters of invitation for the interview projects were issued to

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<sup>1</sup> Class-master in Star School also known as Mentor Teacher took on the following jobs: maintaining a good record of student attendance, communicating with parents in regard to student learning and behaviour problems in school, providing students with guidance and making referrals to the school social worker in case of emotional problems. There are two class-masters in each class in Star School and they are also members of Quality Circle of Form 3 Cohort.

individual informants. (Refer respectively to Appendix 5 for the letter of invitation to study participants and Appendix 6 for consent form for interview). To my delight, all of them agreed to participate in my interview project and their basic information is depicted below:

**Table 3.1A**

Informants in the Positive Experience Group (the top ten in the list)

<i>Pseudonym of Informant</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>No. of years in the present school</i> <i>(September 2003-December, 2005)</i>	<i>Level</i>
Yan-ka	F	14	2.5	Form 3
Fung-wang	M	15	2.5	Form 3
Ching-ching	F	15	2.5	Form 3
Wah-ka	M	14	2.5	Form 3
Shing-siu	M	16	2	Form 3
Ki-yuen	F	15	2.5	Form 3
Fai-shing	M	14	2.5	Form 3
Fung-kin	M	15	2.5	Form 3
Ni-yi	F	14	2.5	Form 3
Yin-ho	M	15	2.5	Form 3



**Table 3.1B**

Informants in the Negative Experience Group (the bottom ten in the list)

<i>Pseudonym of Informant</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>No. of years in the present school</i> <i>(September 2003-December, 2005)</i>	<i>Level</i>
Kuen-siu	M	14	2.5	Form 3
Lai-ngai	F	15	2.5	Form 3
Kit-chun	M	15	2.5	Form 3
Ho-kwun	M	14	2.5	Form 3
Ki-hoi	M	15	2.5	Form 3
Kwan-shuk	F	15	2.5	Form 3
Ying-ka	F	14	2.5	Form 3
Ping-kwai	F	15	2.5	Form 3
Chiu-kwok	M	14	2.5	Form 3
Ho-man	M	15	2.5	Form 3

### 3.6 Research tools of study

One of the purposes of this study is to examine the students' psychosocial experiences in a Hong Kong secondary setting. To explore the subjects' complicated psychosocial experiences, the most important qualitative research tool, in-depth interview, was employed to capture as rich as data as possible. In-depth interviewing is one type of qualitative interview study, which is characterized by being nondirective, unstructured, nonstandardized, and open-ended. Moreover, in-depth interviewing involves "repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 88). The most advantageous point of using the in-depth interview in the present study is that the use of spoken words is an extremely direct, sentimental, effective way of expressing potentially lively and vivid data about study participants' school experiences.

In addition to the in-depth interviews, short informal interviews or semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the study participants in the research field. The interviews of these types are "less flexible and dynamics" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 88) and usually guided by pre-designed questions.

Some other qualitative research tools, namely, participant observation and document review were also adopted in this study. Participant observation has much in common with interviewing. Like observers, interviewers “come on slow” initially. “Both have to establish rapport with informants and ask nondirective questions early in the research. The participant observer gains first-hand knowledge of what people say and do in their everyday lives. The interviewer relies extensively on verbal accounts of how people act and what they feel (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 88)”.

Moreover, a quantitative research tool, an 18-item questionnaire, was also used for the purpose of sampling. This has already been discussed in detail earlier. In addition, a questionnaire was designed for the 10 class-masters of the Form 3 cohort to explore their strategies in nurturing underachievers as well as their beliefs in relation to educational issues (*This questionnaire will be fully discussed in Section 3.8 of this chapter. Also refer to Appendix 10 for a sample*). Two questionnaires that were provided by Star School were used to evaluate IE programmes for Form 3 cohort. (*Refer respectively to Appendix 7 for the questionnaire in connection with the inter-class competition and Appendix 8 for the questionnaire in connection with voluntary services and training for Form 3 cohort*). All the data were collected during a series of visits to the research site over a period of nine month’s time, commencing from November 2005 through July, 2006.

### **3.7 Accessing the key informants through in-depth interviews**

In this study, in-depth interviews were employed most of the time. I set the main themes of inquiry and some guidelines but I did not follow them strictly. It was important for me to allow the informants to disclose information naturally and spontaneously. I sometimes shifted the focus of depth of the inquiry and the order of questions, allowing the flow of conversation more flexible and natural. In the midst of interviews, informants might ask me personal questions and I made an attempt to respond to them. These features are not salient in the structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews.

As a researcher, first and foremost, it was important for me to build up a relationship of trust between the informants and myself so that they would feel able to speak freely about their personal experiences. At the beginning of the first meeting, very short informal interviews were conducted with all informants in order to build up rapport with them, explaining the aims of the project and the schedule of the in-depth interviews, answering any questions to alleviate their worries and discussing the major themes in the in-depth interviews and collecting their background information and demographic data, such as name, age and class. First and last, I expressed my sincere

thanks to them for attending my interviews and allowing me to audio-tape all the interviews. That is the reason why Spradley (1979) emphasizes that without the presence of rapport, informants might discontinue their cooperation.

I expected that the findings of the inquiry would bridge the gap between the theories of motivation and IE and the past relevant studies; therefore, the themes of in-depth interviews were confined to several emerged broad domains from observed facts in the previous studies concerning motivation for learning.

In the in-depth interviews, I conducted an in-depth understanding of the informants' experiences in school with the following major themes on mind:

1. *their attitudes towards learning and school strategies*
2. *their relationships with teachers and schoolmates in school*
3. *successful and unsuccessful experiences in school*
4. *family support and expectation*
5. *learning strategies*
6. *personal aspiration and goal of life*
7. *their belief in their ability of learning*
8. *past experiences in learning*

There are two major types of informants, namely key informants and ancillary informants. In this study, the key informants were the 20 Form 3 cohort (2005-2006). "Key informants are persons who are strategically placed in regard to the central purposes of the study" (Dobbert, 1982, p. 115). Each informant was interviewed three times, 40 minutes each, during the research period. The total number of interviews in this study accounted for 60, which formed the core source of data analysis. The interviews were conducted in a small special room in Star School during school hours. Moreover, all the interviews were conducted in Cantonese. Both the study participants and I speak Cantonese, which is the popular dialect of Chinese language in Hong Kong; therefore we could communicate quite well with our mother-tongue. The use of Cantonese is advantageous in this study because Spradley (1979) points out that language and language use are all important in the interview study especially during the process of discovery.

The interview project started in January 2006 and completed at the end of June, 2006. The study was carried out over 6 months in three separate periods with at least an interval of 4 weeks after the preceding interviews, allowing me to transcribe the interviews, re-formulate the themes and prepare some follow-up questions for

individual interviewees if necessary. However, another reason for this arrangement was to identify changes in the respondents' attitudes to their academic and school experiences during the intervals. The consecutive interviews were also intended to elicit further information from the informants' after a lapse of short period; compare and contrast their opinions collected previously and finally ask for elaboration or clarification if necessary because in-depth interviews provided a substantial vocal way for me to compare and contrast the respondents' opinions.

Taylor & Bogdan (1998) note that it is important to conduct in-depth interviews in consecutive sessions so that researchers would establish rapport with informants through repeated face-to-face contacts to develop a detailed understanding of their experiences and perspectives. In this study, the consecutive in-depth interviews were used to collect the data that the questionnaire could not provide for me. The interviews extended from friendly conversation to an in-depth understanding of the students experiences, feelings, problems and other issues arise during the interviews.

### **3.8 Accessing ancillary informants**

"Ancillary informants are used to provide reliability checks, to obtain complementary or opposing data, to help distinguish informants' personality patterns from cultural patterns, and to counteract whatever biases of the researcher led to the choice of the key informant" (Dobbert, 1982, p.115). In addition to conducting in-depth interviews with the 20 particularly selected informants, on involving ancillary informants, that is, the remaining study participants of the Form 3 cohort in the research (*147 study participants in total*), informal interviews were also conducted during field observations. These on-the-spot interviews focused on the inquiry about their feedback on the activities. The findings were also used to compare and contrast the data collected from in-depth interviews with those 20 informants.

In the hope of procuring complementary information about the school operation and the policies that were concerned with the Form 3 cohort, another group of ancillary informants, namely, the 10 class-masters of the Form 3 cohort were also approached. For the above purposes of inquiry, I drafted a list of questions for the 10 Form 3 mentor teachers. The questions were designed to facilitate me to examine the teachers' belief in education and strategies of nurturing the Form 3 cohort. I informally conversed with the co-ordinator of the Form 3 class-masters, Mr Li, and tentatively asked him these questions in our conversation so that he would tell me if these questions could serve the purposes of my inquiry. I managed to obtain his

comments on my questionnaires. Based his suggestions, I rewrote the questionnaire so that I would achieve the objectives of the inquiry as well as enhancing its content validity. Finally, I invited the 10 class-masters to complete the questionnaire for me. It was encouraging that all of them were keen to complete the questionnaire, returning to me with detailed information about their belief in education and the strategies of nurturing the Form 3 cohort. (*Refer respectively to Appendix 9 for the letter to Form 3 class-masters and Appendix 10 for the questionnaire for Form 3 class-masters*).

### **3.9 Accessing triangulated field data through participant observations**

In addition to implementing the 6-month interview study, from December, 2005 through July, 2006, I also regularly visited the school, participated in the activities mainly involving the Form 3 cohort and observed lessons concerning the Form 3 cohort, with a view to obtaining first-hand data about the study participants and how the school operated. As Brewer (2000) notes, participant observation is used to “generate data through watching and listening to what people naturally do and say, but also add the dimension of personally experiencing and sharing the same everyday life as those under study” (p. 59). On the other hand, Dobber (1982) puts it this way, “...through participant observation, the researcher may discover many important social patterns. Value patterns, concepts, and beliefs, however, cannot be directly observed. Ideas can, of course, be inferred from actions, but the researcher cannot be certain of the validity of those inferences unless he speaks with people to find the reasons behind those actions” (p. 115). Therefore, in this study, besides observing the study participants with specific focuses, I also conducted on-the-spot informal interviews in the fields, focusing on the inquiry about the study participants’ feedback on the activities. The findings were also used to compare and contrast the data collected from in-depth interviews. For example, I participated in the school visit to Hong Kong Space Museum in April 2006, which was specially arranged by English teachers for the Form 3 cohort as one of the out-of-classroom English learning activities. In this school event, I focused on the ways how the study participants learnt outside school. On another occasion in the research site, I could obtain an opportunity to appreciate their wonderful creativity, rather than their ability of learning, which they exhibited in the fashion show organized by the Form 3 cohort themselves in July, 2006 (*Refer to Appendix 11 for participant observation reports*).

Brewer (2000) suggests picking out the key events in the field, which ‘focal events’ for the people under study, for example, festival and celebrations and moments of special significance to the group or noteworthy activities. From December 2005 through July 2006, in total, I conducted 30 field observations, ranging from 10

minutes to 12 hours, both inside the school site and outside the school and all the events only involved the Form 3 cohort. As well as being a researcher, I was also employed by the Principal of Star School, the gate keeper of the research site, as a supply teacher in Star School in four different periods across 2005-2006 school year, amounting to 79 school days, to substitute the staff of the school, who were released on study leave. During one of these four periods, I was also assigned as Form 3 assistant class-master for 17 days and I needed to perform the duties that Form 3 class-masters usually took on, for example, checking students' assignments and running activities for my students. In this way, I could obtain ample time of making direct contact with the Form 3 cohort and investigating how they responded to the ecosystem of the school in connection with their behaviours, especially their learning behaviours, emotion and cognition in return for the school inviting strategies.

Sometimes, I appeared in the research site as a researcher conducting interviews in my "office", which was especially arranged by the school for my field work, and field observations and at the other times, I entered the classrooms as a supply teacher. Gradually, I gained a membership role and I had a role to play in the research site. Brewer (2000) points out that as a participant observer, the primary personal quality is to maintain the balance between 'insider' and 'outsider' status. If I maintained a professional distance, I might obtain adequate observation and I could also preserve a professional identity but I would sacrifice rapport which could facilitate my in-depth interviews. In short, during the research period, I made every endeavour to maintain a proper balance in the participant observer's dual role as part insider and part outsider and gave myself the opportunity to be inside and outside the setting.

### **3.10 Accessing triangulated field data through reviewing official school documents**

With the permission from the school authority, a wide variety of official school documents were collected for my review, for example, Action Plan for Implementing IE in Star School <sup>1</sup>(2003-2004), Portfolio of Implementation of IE in Star School (2003-2006)<sup>2</sup>, Site-visit Reports on Star School, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *In this action plan, IE project schools should outline the strategies and schedules of implementing IE in their schools and this plan should be submitted to the Hong Kong Education Bureau and International Alliance of Invitational Education for reference.*

<sup>2</sup> *This Portfolio reports how Star School has implemented Invitational Education in the school in past years and it is submitted to the IAIE for part of assessment of "Inviting School Award" in 2006.*

<sup>3</sup> *The IAIE dispatched IE experts to visit the schools that had applied for the Inviting School Awards and examined how the schools were implementing IE in their schools. These reports were written by those IAIE experts.*

submitted by the IAIE professionals, questionnaire survey reports and students' attendance records, which provided reliability checks on the data collected from the key informants and ancillary informants. According to Hadley & Mitchell (1995), official records are not instruments and they are nonreactive in relation to research project but they can provide useful research data.

### **3.11      Entering record of fieldwork**

While visiting the research site or conducting participant observations, I kept memo entries, which were short documents that I wrote to myself as I was visiting the site so that I could proceed through the analysis of a corpus of data afterwards. Most of the time, the school technician video-taped the school events for the retention of the school records, which would be available on request for my research purposes. When I discovered something important in the memo data, which were related to the theories in the literature, I would try to develop theoretical implications. The final theory and report was typically the integration of several theoretical memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

### **3.12      Role of interviewer as researcher and reflexivity**

On discussing the role of a researcher of an interview study, LeCompe & Preissle, (1993) remind us of the following requirements: first, we should be aware of subjectivity while interpreting data; second, we should maintain constant interaction with participants; third, we should change from outsiders to members of the family, thus sharing the same passions and crises of the community.

During the research period, especially while conducting the in-depth interviews, I could establish a very close relationship with the 20 informants as well as the other study participants of the Form 3 cohort. The vivid and rich data I had collected through interviews could reflect their enthusiasm to talk to me and their trust in me. The study participants were very interested in my role as a researcher. Some of them asked me why I was still studying in school since I was rather 'old' as they judged by my age and some of them were very surprised that I did not need to go to school as a student in the university. Certainly, I was very keen to fulfill their curiosity by answering all their questions and interaction among us therefore enhanced in this way. They shared with me not only their negative feelings but also their positive feelings in school. For instance, two female respondents told me that they would like to be teachers after graduation because they found their teachers in there were very diligent and caring about students. Thanks to this research, I could obtain more understanding

about their passion as well as personal aspiration. Before the research, I obtained information from past studies, which depicted that ALAs would become less motivated to learn and a negative emotion about their school would gradually evoke. Being a teacher for more than thirty years before I retired, I had also taught underachievers in low-band secondary schools and I could therefore witness their low motivation in learning and more importantly, I had really experienced their disruptive behaviour in class. Brewer (2000) states that “reflexibility” is one of the qualities of a qualitative researcher, which requires a critical attitude towards data and recognition of the influence on the research results. Without it, data will be exaggerated and the weakness underemphasized. In my case, the difficulty of keeping an objective stand lied in my particular past unpleasant experience with the disruptive behaviour of the ALAs. Through in-depth interviews with the informants, I came to realize some of my bias on them and I, as a green interviewer as researcher, should learn from the informants. In this study, reflexivity involved me reflecting upon the ways in which my own values, experiences, interests, beliefs and aims in life had shaped the research. Reflexibility also worked more like an exploratory element throughout the study rather than locating my observations into existing theoretical accounts.

### **3.13 Ethical issues**

In regard to ethical issues, three foremost ethical issues particularly found worth claiming attention encompass: informants’ consent, confidentiality and privacy and data dissemination. Because of the obligation of protecting the privacy of participants (Hadley & Mitchell, 1995), I had to falsify their names. All in-depth interviews were audio-taped and all the tapes would be destroyed six months after the thesis had been completed. (*Refer to Appendix 12 for samples of interview scripts*). Last but not least, written consents were obtained from all informants and no individual cases were discussed with the staff who were not involved in the project so as to protect privacy of informants. However, the ancillary informants’ data would facilitate me to procure a fuller picture of the school operation and investigate the setting from a different angle.



### 3.14 Analyzing data of study

Analysis in the interview study is an activity of making sense of the qualitative data collected (Fetterman, 1989) and analyzing qualitative data is basically an inductive and data-led activity (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). On the other hand, Rubin & Rubin (1995) state that “the purpose of the data analysis is to organize the interviews to present a narrative that explains what happened or provide a description of the norms and values that underline cultural behaviour (p. 229)”

My approach to analyzing data paralleled Spradley's (1979) and Strauss & Corbin (1990) systems because both Spradley and Strauss & Corbin have devised formal systems for the analysis of qualitative data. Each approach involves techniques for finding and marking the underlying ideas in the data, grouping similar information together and relating different ideas and themes to one another. On elucidating the meaning of 'coding of data', Taylor & Bogdan (1998) put it this way, “In qualitative research, coding is a way of developing and refining interpretation of the data. The coding process involves bringing together and analyzing all the data bearing on major themes, ideas, concepts, interpretations, and prepositions (p. 150)”.

According to Brewer (2000), in real field work, data analysis is conducted at the same time with data collection and analysis usually embarks when the field notes are read and typed before the following visit to the field, when categories, descriptive units and links appear. Therefore, from the very first day of the field work in Star School, I began to conduct the analysis on the field data in my field diary. Actually, the formal analysis started with initial reviews of all the raw data including the tapes and field notes. After interviews, the tape recording was then transcribed verbatim. This stage was mainly concerned with the preparation of the data to be placed into categories to obtain an in-depth familiarization with the data, which required a total immersion in the data by listening to the interviews and reading transcripts, in order to note core ideas and concepts, recognize emotive stories, and find themes. To crosscheck or confirm some information during the research, I also needed to go through relevant documents, and other materials, in particular, participant observation data, indicating which data should fit under which coding categories.

Transcribing 60 in-depth interviews and analyzing the interview data and field observation notes was quite a laborious job for me as the coding required enormous concentration and a good memory for making future links between possible topics of interest. On listening to the in-depth interview scripts, I found it helpful to develop a story line to guide theorizing and analysis because “the story line is the analytic thread

that unites and integrates the major themes in a study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 151)". To perceive a whole picture of the research site, I made an attempt to explicate the following story line after reading and re-reading all the transcripts:

*"Before being admitted to Star School, most study participants or their parents had a very negative impression about it. After studying in the school for two and a half years, they had changed to a more positive attitude towards it. They felt good when they were at school. They responded positively to the school activities. Some students reported that they had fun in school and they had some positive experiences in school, for example, winning prizes. They liked going to school. Most importantly, they enjoyed very close peer relationship and teacher-student relationship in Star School."*

In setting up my preliminary categories, I followed Spradley's (1979) of domain analysis by asking myself which ideas or concepts go together to form a cluster of related terms and processes. Each cluster then became a major coding category; the individual ideas and themes were treated as subcategories. I organized these categories into grouping of ideas that are thematically related, a process that Strauss (1987) labeled axial coding. For example, in one of the sections, I wished to explore the informants' feelings in school most of the time. On grouping together all the dialogue extracts concerning their feelings in school, I noticed that some pieces of data that might be fitted into two or more coding categories. These were then coded properly according to all relevant categories. I should code both positive and negative incidents relating to a theme or coding category, that is, I should also include both informants' good feelings and bad feelings about the school in that particular domain, for example, contrasting the informants' positive opinions on pupil grouping in Star school with those negative ones regarding the same issue.

I followed a two-stage process of thinking about the data. On the first stage, I examined and compared the materials within categories. On the second stage, I compared materials across categories. For example, in two episodes of the in-depth interviews, two informants respectively claimed that they studied very hard for the final examination because of their classmates' encouragement. To investigate if there were any positive effects of such peer support on their learning, I triangulated their claim by examining the school document data—the informants' examination results. By using the constant comparative method of this type, I was able to look for inter-connective themes that emerged between the categories and separate research units in the data.

Related themes helped me build toward a broader description or overall theory (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). On the final stages of analysis, I organized the data in ways that help me refine concepts, and link them together to create a clear description or explanation of a phenomenon. This material required my interpretation in terms of the literature and theories in the researcher's field (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). For instance, having analyzed the interview extracts about the informants' feelings in school, the theme 'a feeling of security in school' came up to me. To address this theme, Maslow's theories about 'the safety and security needs' shed light upon on my interpretation on the effects of informants' feelings and behaviours after they had fulfilled the basic physiological needs in school. By presenting the results of my grounded interview data in comparison on broader theories, I could establish the theoretical significance of my study.

The data analysis ended when I had found overarching themes and put them in the context of broader theory. Then I started to write up the final report. In this analysis, having collated and tracked down related themes and sub-categories, an overarching theme—"the positive effects of social relationship factor on learning" emerged and the related literature, in particular, motivation theories and IE theories, further guided me to the interpretation of the causal condition, phenomenon and consequences that constitute the study.

### **3.15 Summary of development of research approach and the procedures of data collection**

Development of the research approach and the procedures of data collection are summarized below:

1. To start a series of pilot studies by developing a 79-item questionnaire to investigate student motivational dimensions and administer it with two groups of students each.
2. Analyze and improve the first questionnaire by factor analysis.
3. Interview a group of students to check their understanding of the questionnaire items and invite them to elaborate their responses in relation to some questionnaire items so as to improve the content validity of the questionnaire.
4. Design interview questions, based on the first questionnaire, to further explore students' experiences in school and pilot-run them with a group of students.

5. Make a decision to change to adopt a more qualitative approach—a case study approach, to explore students' experience in school as the results of the pilot studies of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Design a new approach, based on the data and analysis procured in the pilot studies.
6. Modify, shorten the 79-item questionnaire and produce a new version—an 18-item questionnaire, which would be used to select 20 informants from 147 study participants for in-depth interviews.
7. Further screen 10 informants out from 147 study participants with the help of the 18-item questionnaire into a positive school experience group and 10 into a negative school experience group.
8. Submit a tentative list of interviewees to the school administration for approval and triangulation.
9. Interview each informant three times over six months.
10. Design and administer a questionnaire for 10 Form 3 class-masters during the research period to investigate their educational belief and strategies of teaching.
11. Pay regular visits to the research site to conduct field work.
12. Read and re-read relevant school documents as pre-research, while-research and post-research activities.

**Table 3.2**

Summary of the use of research tools and record of field work in Star School

Item	Date / Period	Type of research tool / instrument	No. of participants involved	Venue	Time	Duration	School event	Purpose of research tool / inquiry	Cross-reference
<b>Questionnaire</b>									
1	6 Jan. 2006	Student Questionnaire (Designed by researcher)	147 study participants of Form 3 cohort	Star School		10 minutes		-To select 20 informants from 147 study participants for in-depth interviews	Appendix 4
2	23 Jan. 2006	Student Questionnaire (Questionnaire and data provided by School)	17 study participants of Form 3 cohort	Star School		10 minutes	Voluntary Services	-To collect the study participants' opinions about the activity -To investigate what they had learnt in the voluntary service	Appendix 7-8
3	May 2006	Student Questionnaire (Questionnaire and data provided by School)	58 study participants of Form 3 cohort	Star School		10 minutes	Grand-priz (Form 3 Inter-class competitions)	-To collect the study participants' opinions about the activities -To investigate what they had learnt in the activities	Appendix 7-8
4	May 2006	Teacher Questionnaire (Designed by researcher)	10 class-masters of Form 3 Cohort	Star School	To be returned two weeks after the issue of question naire	20 minutes		-To investigate teachers' educational beliefs and strategies to teach the Form cohort -To investigate how Form 3 Quality Circle operated	Appendix 9-10

Item	Date / Period	Type of research tool / Instrument	No. of participants	Venue	Time	Duration	School event	Purpose of research tool / inquiry	Cross-reference
<b>In-depth interviews</b>									
5	January, 2006 – June, 2006	In-depth interviews	20 informants of F. 3 cohort	Inter-view room of Star School	During school hours	40 minutes each *3 interviews for each informant		-To explore informants' successful and unsuccessful learning experiences, their feelings at school, relationships in school, their personal aspirations and self-perception in ability and learning	Appendix 12
<b>Field visit, participant observation and informal interview</b>									
6	5 Dec. 2005	Field visit *(Meeting class-masters of Form 3 cohort)	10 Class-masters of Form 3 cohort	Meeting Room of Star School	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	2 hours		-To explain the purpose of research To discuss the schedule of research	Appendix 11
7	13 Dec. 2005	Participant observation and informal interviews	30 study participants of Form 3 cohort	School hall of Star School	10:00 am – 12:30 pm	2.5 hours	Volunteers training day for Form 3 cohort	-To collect the study participants' opinions about the training -To investigate what they had learnt in the activity	Appendix 11
8	23 Dec. 2005	Participant observation	147 study participants and 10 class-masters of Form 3 cohort	Form 3 class-rooms	9:00 am – 11:30 am	2.5 hours	Christmas Celebration Party	-To investigate teacher-student relationship / peer relationship -To understand more about school events	Appendix 11

Item	Date / Period	Type of research tool / Instrument	No. of participants	Venue	Time	Duration	School event	Purpose of research tool / inquiry	Cross-reference
9	17 Jan. 2006	Participant observation and informal interviews	18 study participants of Form 3 cohort	Arts Room of Star School	4:00 pm – 5 pm	1 hour	Poster Board Painting Competition (Form 3 Inter-class competition)	-To collect the study participants' opinions about the activity -To investigate how they learnt in the experiential learning activity	Appendix 11
10	21 March, 2007	Participant observation	147 study participants of Form 3 cohort	Science Museum of Hong Kong	2 pm – 5 pm	3 hours	English Project Day	-To collect the study participants' opinions about the activity -To investigate how they learnt in experiential learning activity	Appendix 11
11	6 April, 2006	Participant observation and informal interviews	147 study participants of Form 3 cohort	Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups Jockey Club Sai Kung Outdoor Camps Kung	9 am – 5 pm	8 hours	Project Learning Day for Form 3 cohort *Theme: <i>"Careers and Further Studies"</i>	-To collect the study participants' opinions about the activity -To investigate how they learnt in experiential learning activity	Appendix 11
12	April 2006	Field visit *(Appreciating the 5 pictures of animals representing each class of Form 3)	*5 Form 3 classrooms	Form 3 class-rooms	4:00 pm – 4:45 pm	45 minutes		-To observe the 5 pictures of animals representing each class of Form 3 Cohort -To investigate strategies of Form 3 class-masters	Appendix 11

Item	Date / Period	Type of research tool / Instrument	No. of participants	Venue	Time	Duration	School event	Purpose of research tool / inquiry	Cross-reference
13	12 May 2006	Field visit *(Meeting co-ordinator of Form 3 class-masters)	Teacher co-ordinator of Form 3 cohort	Meeting Room of Star school	2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	1.5 hours		-To understand Form 3 teachers' inviting strategies -To seek advice from co-ordinator about the draft of teacher questionnaire	Appendix 11
14	June, 2006	Participant observation	16 study participants of Form 3	Form 3 class-rooms	after 4:30 pm	10 mins – 15 mins (3 days)	Form 3 after-school tutorial classes	-To investigate how teachers helped students after school	Appendix 11
15	January 2006– May 2006	Participant observation *(Observing classroom teaching)	4 teachers	Form 3 classes	3 English lessons and 1 Mathematics lessons	40 mins each lesson *4 lessons	Normal school days	-To understand how study participants learnt in class -To understand the work of teachers	Appendix 11
16	Dec. 2005 – Jan. 06	Participant observation *Researcher assigned as assistant Form 3 class-master	One Form 3 class	Form 3 class-room	17 days	3:50 pm – 4:30 pm	Additional class-master period	-To conduct routine duties of a Form 3 class-master -To observe how class-masters worked	Appendix 11
17	Oct. 2005 – June 2006	Participant observation *Researcher recruited as supply teacher in the research field for four periods across 2005-2006	Forms 1, 3 and 4	Class-rooms	78 days	8:00 am – 5:00 pm	Normal school days	-To conduct teaching -To build up rapport with F. 3 teachers and study participants	Appendix 11
18	9 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 2009	Semi-structured interview with Vice-principal	1 Vice-principal	Vice-principal room	45 mins	6:00 pm – 6:45 pm	Normal school days	-To further understand the changes of school and study participants after research	Appendix 14



Item	Date / Period	Type of research tool / Instrument	No. of participants	Venue	Time	Duration	School event	Purpose of research tool / inquiry	Cross-reference
<b>Document Reviews</b>									
19	Oct 2005 – June, 2006	1. Portfolio of Invitational Education Programmes of Star School, 2003-2006 2. Action Plan of Invitational Education of Star School, 2003-2006 3. Site Reports on Star School, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 submitted by the IAIE 4. Principal's letter applying for Inviting School Award 5. Report on School Effectiveness submitted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004 6. Study Participants' exam results			Pre-research, While-research and post-research			-To grasp a global picture of implementation of Invitational Education in Star school -To crosscheck information collected from interviews	

## Chapter 4

### **Data Analysis: Student perspectives and experiences with Invitational Education**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

Data analysis of the study is split into two chapters with two core categories, namely, “Student perspectives and experiences with Invitational Education” and “Perspectives from teachers, the community and educational bodies”. These two chapters set forth the achievement of the study by identifying salient themes and patterns found in the data as seen from the study participants’ school experiences and teachers’ perspectives on their students and the school operation through triangulated methods of collecting data. The approach of this analysis moves from descriptive to conclusive. In other words, the analysis primarily is intended to identify significant raw data, categorize them, and present them systematically. The subsequent chapters aim to link the findings or evidence with the framework as discussed in the literature review in order to get the findings grounded with theoretical support. In this analysis, study participants’ school experiences were confined to the context of Invitation Education which had been implemented in the case study school since 2003. Having analyzed the richness of the students’ experiences in their own terms and the teacher experience, expectations and strategies, the depth of the study could be achieved. In turn, I was able to procure a bigger as well as more significant picture about how IE was implemented in the case study School and how it might have influenced the motivational dimensions of the ALAs.

In the present study, the triangulation of methods was reflected by its use of in-depth interviews, informal interviews, semi-structured interviews, classroom teaching observations, participation observations, field visits, student questionnaires, teacher questionnaires, and document review while the triangulation of sources included 147 Form 3 study participants and 10 Form 3 teachers. At the same time, out of 147 study participants, 20 informants were selected for in-depth interviews.

The core source of data was mainly collected through in-depth interviews with 20 informants of Form 3 cohort. Each informant was interviewed three times, 40 minutes each, during the research period. The total number of interviews accounted for 60. It was expected that the informants could provide very original, authentic, lively, vivid and interesting verbal data about their school experiences, which can explain why a greater length has been devoted to this chapter as compared with Chapter 5.

This chapter aims to analyze how the study participants reacted to human relationship at school, the school events, the teacher influence, the school policies and the ecological environment of the school, in which they had experienced IE for a couple of years. Categorization of the themes of the study was processed with reference to motivation theories, for instance, the hierarchy of Maslow's needs—"physiological needs, safety needs, affiliative needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs" as well as IET. As the products of the analysis, there are six major themes emerging in this study, namely, (1) emotion; (2) relationships in school; (3) sense of security and belonging; (4) attitude towards school, (5) expectations, personal aspiration, self-perception in effort and ability and (6) learning. Above all, an attempt was made to examine if the basic needs of the study participants had been fulfilled in the case study school. The results of the analysis are presented in six sections in this chapter with the above core themes as main headings.

At the very beginning of the in-depth interviews, I asked the informants what their feelings were like when they came to school in the morning with a view to exploring their feelings in school most of the time. Section 4.1 therefore analyzes and describes their emotions in the school most of the time and how their emotion affected their learning.

In Section 4.2, the chapter goes on to describe the informants' relationships with their classmates and teachers in more detail. Most importantly, it aims to explore how the peer relationships and teacher-student relationships affected students' learning and emotions.

It was common that students' parents were worried about the students misbehaviours, fighting and bullying in Star School, which was regarded as an unpopular school as a result. Specially, the focus of Section 4.3 was then laid on the

informants' sense of security in the school setting as perceived by themselves in past years. On procuring the first-hand information about their real experience, I asked them if they had ever experienced themselves any theft, vandalism or bullying in the school. On the other hand, an attempt was made to investigate their sense of belonging and general satisfaction about their school life.

Section 4.4 analyzes how the informants' parents, relatives and friends viewed the case study school before their children were admitted to the school; at the same time, how the informants themselves viewed their own school after they had studied in the school for three years. Other aims of this section were to analyze the changes of their attitude towards their school and investigate the reasons for the changes.

In Section 4.5, the chapter analyzes the expectations of the informants' parents on the study participants and also their own personal aspirations. It also reports the informants' perspectives on the goals of the school. It is expected that the data analyzed in this section will provide evidence for the evaluation of school policies and strategies in line with IE.

Past studies (e.g Purkey, 1970; Crake, 1988; Chan & Lee, 1993) claim that ALAs usually have low self-esteem and low self-concept in effort and ability. Even worse, some have developed learner helplessness after encountering frustrations in learning. In this study, I was very keen on exploring the informants' self-concept in effort and ability after they had been studying and growing in Star School for three years. Therefore, Section 4.6 analyzes the informants' learning experiences, both successful and unsuccessful experiences, their learning problems, in particular, their frustrations in learning and most of all, it analyzes their attitude towards learning and their self-concept of effort and ability.

In Section 4.7, there provides a summary of the major findings which are intended to collate all relevant codes and themes and reach tentative conclusions.

## 4.1 Emotion

This section describes and analyzes the informants' feelings about studying in Star School and their school life in past years. It was noted that most of the informants found themselves in a good mood most of the time in the school; they had attained general satisfaction about their school life and some would miss their classmates, teachers and school during long holidays. Above all, most of them stressed the importance of social relationships in school. Some of them even pointed out that positive emotional state was important to their learning in school. However, in some occasions, bad mood would affect their persistence in learning.

### 4.1.1 Positive social relationships elicits good feeling in school

It was noted that most of the informants had good feelings about going to school. The following are some examples.

Kei-hoi felt happy when seeing his classmates in school and he would prefer to go to school rather than staying at home:

*"When I have entered the school, I feel happy because I can see some familiar faces there."*

Fung-wang also missed his classmates during long holidays:

*"I feel bored if I do not go to school....Staying at home for a long time is very boring. I like to go to school to see my classmates."*

Kuen-siu found it comfortable when he was back to school and he enjoyed conversing with his classmates.

*"Back to school?...OK...feel comfortable...[Long pause]...because I can see my friends in school."*

Ho-man was rather shy during the interviews with me. However, he expressed to me that he really expected to learn and enjoyed making friends in school.

*“Good feeling...is....I can go to school...bad feeling is that I can't go to school... I can understand more...And...I can make more friends [in the school].”*

In addition to showing appreciation to her kind teachers, Lai-ngai reported that she had good memories about her classroom:

*“I like the classroom most...There are a lot of good memories in the classroom...I remember the time we played [with our classmates] there; also once when we had a birthday party for Miss Lam [her class-mistress, a pseudonym].”*

Some of the informants found the staff of the school very friendly and they also enjoyed the open spaces and greenish environment. For example,

*“At the entrance, the security guard greets students, “Good morning.” (Fung-kin)*

*“My feeling? Well, I feel warm...When I enter the school every morning, I am greeted.”(Ki-yuen).*

On the other hand, when Yan-ka came to school every morning, she felt:

*“...that I have come back to my home...the place is quite familiar to me.”*

Ching-ching's mood improved when she saw the greenish environment of the school because:

*“When we look at the green plants, we feel much fresher...Before entering the school, I am not awake but when I see the plants and the flowers, my mood will become much better.”*

Ni-yi also thought that the greenery environment of the school created good feeling for her, which facilitated her to learn. She explained her feeling to me:

*"...I'll remember much better when I'm happy... So you know, studying is affected by emotion. If you are sad then you don't want to attend the lessons."*

#### **4.1.2 Positive emotion in school is important**

Kei-hoi enjoyed Physical Education (PE) lessons and doing experiments in science lessons because he had free time there and he could play with his friends during PE lessons. He felt good in school most of the time but sometimes his bad mood would affect his learning because:

*"When I am not happy, I won't pay attention to teachers. And when I am harassed by my classmates, I will lose temper easily."*

On the other hand, Ching-ching was very expectant after coming back to school in the morning:

*"That is the new beginning of the day... I don't know what will happen today."*

In fact, Ching-ching was often praised for her good performance in school by her teachers in past years so she said to me, *"Today I don't want to be scolded...I will be praised."* Therefore, she always expected something positive about her during the school days:

Ni-yi explained to me how her moods affected her learning in school: *"If I'm not happy, even having the subject I like most, I don't want to attend it. On the other hand, if I'm happy, I'll be much involved in it."* Even she would become more proactive to learn in class if she was in good mood: *"I'm keen to raise hands and answer the teachers' questions. Even if we are not required to do so, we take the initiative in doing that [task]."*

Coming back to school in the morning, Wah-ka felt very excited because he often had very successful experiences in school:

*"I expect that something new may happen every day....Well, some prizes...some funny things to play."*

Lai-ngai pointed out that the teachers' positive attitude towards students had influenced her attitude towards learning:

*"If the teachers teach well, we may study harder. They care about us. When we can't catch up, they teach us again."*

Kwan-shuk, Kuen-siu, Lai-ngai and Fung-kin also pointed that they had good feelings in school most of the time. However, in some occasions, bad mood would really affect learning. For example, Lai-ngai's persistence in learning was affected by her bad mood:

*"...Sometimes, we made a lot of noise in class and therefore the teachers scolded us. Then the next day, I would be in a bad mood in class. I think I am not persistent enough."*

Ping-kwai did not find learning enjoyable in school but she still stressed that being happy in school was very important to her:

*"Well, I am happy [in school], then I am in good mood...then I will be healthier."*  
*[Laughter].*



#### 4.1.3 Studying in School—"It is like a robot" and "It's quite a long day."

Not all informants reported much good feeling about learning in school. A couple of informants did not have much special feeling about going to school. Instead, they found their school life very routine and tiring. For example,

Chun-kit did not find the activities in school interesting so he found the school days too long for him. In the interviews, he made complaints like the following:

*"Now we have an addition lesson at the end of each day...It is too early for me to go to school in the morning. We also have a reading session on the morning of the school day...Reading session is useless to me. I don't like reading. I don't understand."*

Sharing a similar feeling with Fai-shing and Chun-kit, Ho-kwun described going to school this way: *"I have to repeat these things every day. [going to school to learn and going home]...just like a robot..."* Ho-kwun also complained that some of his teachers were too strict and the lessons very boring and he had sometimes contemplated if he would escape from school. Fortunately, he forsook his plan at last. In fact, coming to school, Ho-kwun really expected: *"something fun to play, not feel very bored in class."*

A couple of informants reported that it was very boring or tiring to study in school. For example, it was very difficult for Ying-ka to start a new school day and she really needed an energizer to do so. More importantly, she detested the boring lessons because:

*"The curriculum is not so attractive...Well, sometimes it is very difficult for me to follow and therefore I don't bother to listen to the teachers... Very often I make the effort to listen to the teachers but I can't understand."*

Similarly, Ping-kwai felt very frustrated with her schoolwork:

*"Oh, I feel I have to study again in school...it is boring. I can't understand. Even I work hard, I can't understand....But sometimes it is happy to play here."*

## **4.2. Relationships**

As discussed in the previous section, most of the informants found it enjoyable and comfortable to come and study in the case study school and most of them stressed the importance of social relationships in school. This section describes and analyzes the informants' social relationships in school in more detail and how the relationships had affected their learning.

The informants' descriptions of the relationships with their 'friends' were very substantial and sentimental. They found classmates and teachers very valuable in his school life because they were caring and they treated their students as friends and children. Conflicts among classmates and with teachers were rarely reported. Only two cases were mentioned in the interviews. On the other hand, it was discovered that possessing friendship had created positive emotion as well as dynamics in learning. Furthermore, emotional support contributed to some informants' personal growth in school. Regarding the pupil grouping policy, most informants favoured the present mixed ability of pupil grouping in the school because they thought their relationships both with classmates and teachers had enhanced in the past three years.

### **4.2.1 Teacher-student relationships and peer relationships**

In the in-depth interviews, an exploratory question was used to ask the informants what they had found in the school in the past three years was the most valuable or important to them. It was very surprising that most of them said 'friendship' was the most valuable to them, which Fai-shing referred to his "classmates and teachers"; Lai-ngai referred to "our classmates in the same class and the teachers"; Kwun-ho referred to "relationships with classmates and teachers" and Ki-yuen referred to "good relationship with teachers". Furthermore, Kei-hoi and Yin-ho included "teachers" in his category of "friends". On the other hand, N-yi was often hilarious to see a lot of smiling 'friends' in the school.

The informants' descriptions of the relationships with their 'friends' were very substantial and sentimental. The excerpts of dialogues in the following sections may help elaborate the above significant points.

#### 4.2.2 “Treating students as their children” and “teachers were like relatives and friends”

Chun-kit found teachers very valuable in his school life because: *“sometimes they care about us.”*

Ping-kwai prized the good relationship with her teachers as she said, *“They [my teachers] are not only my teachers but also my friends”* and she described how her teachers treated them:

*“...the teachers in this school did not have prejudice against students with low academic achievement.”*

*“Friendship and the good relationship with our teachers are important to me. Teachers usually like students with good academic performance....Teachers like us although we are bad.”*

Chun-kit appreciated his teachers because:

*“...they treat us as their children...They insist that we should do our best and they give us a lot of opportunities.”*

Although Chiu-kwok frequently encountered conflicts with his teachers in the past, as time went, he had become more mature in school because of his teachers’ influence. Then Chiu-kwok treasured the good relationship with his classmates and teachers as he said,

*“Well, the relationship with my teachers...they are like my relatives and friends. Even during holidays, I wish to come back to school to play with them. Well, many classmates have the same feeling. When we are learning in school, we want to have holidays but when we are having long holidays, we want to go back to school....”*

#### 4.2.3 The Importance of peers —“Knowledge and Friends”

Wah-ka thought both “*knowledge and friends*” were important to him in his school life and the following described what he had learnt from his teachers:

*“I have learnt the correct attitude towards life and how to communicate with people [from his teachers]. I have also learnt how to do Mathematical problems...English...another foreign language for me to communicate with foreign people....My teachers often help me with my studies and they will continue to help me in the future. So we have very good relationship.”*

#### 4.2.4 Friendship means happiness

Fung-kin could make a lot of many friends in school because: “*My friends...they trust me...We can talk and share our happiness and unhappiness.*”

Possessing friendship would create positive emotion, according to Fung-wang. He also thought friendship was important to him because:

*“When I have friends, I am much happier. We can talk a lot. If there is only myself, I will feel lonely.”*

#### 4.2.5 Student grouping

In this section, I would like to explore how the school policy of student grouping had affected the study participants’ relationships and learning in class. The data for this section was mainly collected through in-depth interviews and supplemented with document review and field visits.

In Hong Kong, it was a common practice to stream the students into different classes of the same form based on their academic performance at the end of each school year. Nevertheless, as Action Plan of Invitational Education of Star School, 2003-2006 states, one of the strategies of IE, Star School had adopted planned heterogeneous grouping for the cohort of the students since 2003/2004, in which pupils were deliberately assigned so that the standards of students in each class were

average or there were mixed abilities in each class; in other words, there were no “elite classes” where all students with good academic achievement were placed together in one particular class whereas all underachievers were allocated to the same class.

The action plan also notes that another important feature of the policy was that the school had made an attempt to appoint the same class-masters (two class-masters for each class) for each class for three consecutive years (i.e. from 2003-2004 to 2005-2006) so that they would understand their students much better, procure good relationship with students, provide guidance and organize activities, both formal and informal, in addition to daily teaching and routine administration.

#### **4.2.5.1 Eliminating labelling effect**

As the in-depth interview data reflected, most of the informants favoured such a student grouping policy because they thought labeling effect on underachievers had been eliminated. As Lai-ngai pointed out, placing all students with low academic achievement in one class would undermine their self-esteem:

*“I don’t think this policy [streaming students based on their academic results] is good to us. Students in the worst class may have very low self-esteem. They want to study hard in this school and gain bright prospect but if they are allocated in the worst class, they won’t have the mood to study hard....I would choose the class having average academic performance, like the class I am studying in now.”*

Chiu-kwok also detested any labelling effect either and he thought that although most of his classmates were ALAs, many teachers had praised their improvement in different occasions and good students in his class had not been influenced by the noisy students in class. He also thought that his class-master did a good job to teach them.

*"... my classmates are more obedient now. Many teachers praised our classmates. In the past, our class was regarded as the worst class among the five classes. So they were wrong. If we made the effort to learn, we could do much better in our schoolwork".*

Kuen-siu thought that if all underachievers were allocated to one class, teachers were unwilling to teach them and his emotion would be rather negative about his classmates:

*"I think my emotion will be very bad. There are many students with bad marks [bad conduct] in the same class...then I will become bad at last....No...I think the present streaming arrangement is better, keeping both good and bad students together in the same class. The achievement performance [of his classmates] is more average."*

In Ki-yuen's class, classmates did not look down the others and she felt a sense of encouragement among her classmates:

*"Our classmates do not laugh at those who have got low marks in tests or exams. Nor are deserted because of it... Yes, one of my classmates once got very low marks. The other classmates did not laugh at them. Instead, they encouraged her to do better."*

Yin-ho, Ying-ka, Wah-ka, Kwan-shuk and Ching-ching would rather study in a class with average standards because the ability grouping would not do them good and they would suffer great pressure. For example, Ying-ka said, *"I would choose to stay with the present class. Most of my classmates have average academic results [in my class]. I will have pressure if I am allocated to the best class because I know my result is not so good."*

Moreover, Kei-hoi, Chiu-kwok and Lai-ngai pointed out that streaming students into different classes based on their academic results would not do them good. Kei-hoi noted that students should learn collaboratively and good students should help weak students in the same class:

*“If the students with bad academic results are put together in one class, it is very difficult for them to make improvement.... The good students can teach the students with bad results.”*

#### **4.2.5.2 Products of close social relationships: union, co-operation, harmony and sense of belonging**

Most of the informants agreed that the planned heterogeneous grouping promoted social relationships, mutual support and a caring culture. In turn, the caring culture was found conducive to the co-operation, sense of belonging, class identity and learning environment and the development of personalities.

Shing-siu, Fung-kin, Chun-kit, Ki-yuen and Wah-ka are good examples to illustrate the good relationships amongst classmates and mutual support.

*“We don’t have prejudice against each other. We have a very good relationship.”*  
(Shing-siu)

*“In the primary school, I seldom talked with my classmates. In this school, I have many topics to talk with my classmates and when I have any questions, I will raise my hands and ask my teachers.”* (Fung-kin)

Chun-kit rejected being placed in a class with bright classmates because “.... our classmates get on quite well and the teachers are kind to us. We feel warm.” This is a good example, which reflected his loyalty to his class.

Ki-yuen found the atmosphere of unity was brought up in her class and she felt cared too because:

*"...when you have a sense of belonging to the school, you are more willing to study in this school...If you don't go to school, you can't have lessons and you learn much less than the other classmates."*

Wah-ka thought that co-operation would facilitate him to learn because:

*"Unity is very important. Because...as a story goes, a single branch can be broken easily but a bunch of branches can't be broken easily... Only one person can't think out the solutions but when many people think about the problems together, they will become simpler and the solutions will be worked out very quickly."* (Wah-ka)

*"I often help them [my classmates] and they often help me, too...They help me solve the difficult mathematical problems...I am very weak at English and they are very keen to answer my questions."* (Wah-ka)

Ching-ching and Ni-yi both agreed that good relationship would yield team spirit. Ching-ching also thought that team spirit was very conducive to learning whereas Ni-yi thought teamwork would encourage mutual acceptance and support:

*"Team spirit...important...for example, in English lessons, we were divided into two groups. We had to answer the teacher's questions and got scores if our answers were right. If we gave wrong answers, then our team would lose the competition. Then we had a sense of guilt. So I think team spirit is very important."* (Ching-ching)

*"In some activities [in the training camp] we had to work together as a team but our classmates were not so co-operative at first...when we had a camp on Cheung Chau Island [September, 2005], we needed to do tasks together but we didn't do well...some classmates were bad and we rejected them. Then we realized we were in the same class...so we worked in a team collaboratively. On the other hand, our teachers encouraged us to work together."* (Ni-yi).



On one occasion, Ping-kwai planned to escape from school because of being in bad mood but she missed her classmates. Finally, she changed her mind and she went to school because: *"...perhaps I want to see my classmates...the teachers always tell us to study hard; otherwise, we can't be promoted to Form 4...er... I have great pressure."*

The above examples showed that positive relationships had really created support among informants.

#### **4.2.5.3 Negative feedback about heterogeneous grouping**

Informants such as Kei-hoi, Yan-ka, Ki-yuen and Shing-siu took a very neutral stance in the policy of pupil grouping. They said there were both advantages and disadvantages in the arrangement. Their comments were rather similar. The following excerpts exhibit the disadvantages in heterogeneous grouping.

Chiu-kwok and Shing-siu both pointed out that they had made fewer new friends because of the student grouping policy:

*"...It is unlucky that we just make friends with our own classmates in the same class. We should know more classmates from the other classes." (Chiu-kwok)*

Yan-ka and Ki-yuen had similar comments as Yan-ka pointed out that some students with good academic results should be re-allocated to the best class in a new school year:

*".... but in fact, there are some bright students in Class B and Class C, then it is a bit unfair to those students because some of them should have been allocated to the best class according to their academic results. Now they are allocated to Class B and Class C, so it is a bit unfair to them." (Yan-ka).*

Fung-kin and Ki-yuen also agreed that all classmates with poor academic results or students with discipline problems should be placed in the same class:

*"I think some naughty students should be picked out and put in another class and good students should be put in one particular class." (Fung-kin)*

Although most of the informants favoured heterogeneous grouping, some of them pointed out that their attention in class had sometimes been distracted because their relationships were so good that they talked a lot with their classmates in class. Kei-hoi , Ping-kwai, Chun-kit , Ching-ching, Ni-yi and Kuen-siu claimed they had this problem.

#### **4.2.6 Group dynamics being created by positive relationships**

The following excerpts are used to analyze how the positive relationships among classmates and teachers helped to form dynamics in learning. Some informants were very successful and they made progress in exam results. Nonetheless, a couple of them could not do well because they were not consistent although they really intended to work hard.

Through the analysis, it was found that close relationship elicited group dynamics, which consequently formed a common goal for the class to win the Bulletin Board Design Competition [a Form 3 Inter-class Competition]. Chiu-kwok's class was a good example to illustrate the above point:

*"...This time, the design of the bulletin is much better than the previous one [the competition]. At least, it is more beautiful, not childish. Perhaps, that was the last competition [Form 3 Inter-class Bulletin Board Design Competition] for us. Next year, we will be promoted to Form 4 and be re-allocated to different classes. Everyone in the class wants to contribute to the design competition..."*

Ying-ka formed a study group with her classmates because they wanted to be promoted to Form 4 together. However, they could not insist on it because:

*"We have tried before but the plan [studying together] failed... We know we are going to study in Form 4 and we decide to study harder. But our foundation is very weak. We cannot understand a lot about our schoolwork."*

Kwan-shuk and her classmates wished to maintain their friendship in the following year. Therefore, she also formed a study group with them:

*“When I had something I didn’t understand, I could ask my classmates at once in the group [study group]. If I stay at home alone, I won’t take out my books to study. We wish we can be promoted to Form 4 together ...So we can maintain our friendship.”*

Shing-siu wished that all of his classmates could be promoted to Form 4 together, which had formed dynamics in his class:

*“... we wish all of us could be promoted [to Form 4] together. We don’t want to miss any of us next year. In short, we had better study together in Form 4 next year. So if we have found anyone who did badly in tests and exams, we will scold them and ask them to study harder.”*

Friends were important to Ni-yi because she had become much more active and she worked much harder than ever as she said, *“Before the first examination...I didn’t like to join any tutorial classes in the past...but this time I joined the Mathematics tutorial classes together with them.”* In fact, Ni-yi did not want to leave her classmates and she wished to study in Form 4 with all of her classmates.

#### **4.2.7 Development of personalities and emotional support**

Informants also reflected that positive social relationships encouraged development of personalities and emotion support. The following are good examples to illustrate the point.

Sometimes Ying-ka quarreled with her parents and then she shared with her sadness with her classmates in school. She thought planned heterogeneous grouping encouraged close social relationship because: *“I can understand their [my classmates’] personalities very well.”*

Ping-kwai often had quarrels with her parents over her poor academic performance at school. Sometimes she felt hurt when her parents scolded her, saying, *"Study harder! You do so badly. How can you find a good job in the future? It is not important for you to support a family but you need to support yourself at least!"*. Hearing this, she felt helpless and often cried to herself. Her classmates always soothed her when she was sad. Ping-kwai found studying at school was a valuable thing to her and she was much happier at school than at home.

Lai-ngai improved in her behaviour because of her classmates' care and encouragement. Moreover, emotional support contributed to her growth in school:

*"Sometimes when I was upset, they [her classmates] would come and stand around me, asking me why I was so sad."*

*"Behaviour...in the past...I was shy but now I'm not. Now I talk loudly and confidently."*

Shing-siu found that he became much braver to speak in front of the class because: *"...when we are acquainted with each other, we may be braver to discuss in class. And we may feel free to do things."*

Kwan-shuk would feel lonely in school when she had no friends as she said: *"Friends...if I have not got any friends, I will feel very lonely."*

Chun-kit was more willing to share his feelings with his classmates than before as he said: *"I will feel more comfortable."* and more importantly, he found his classmates' advice very useful.

Friends were important to Kuen-siu as he said, *"...if one has no friends, he can't survive."* Because of his classmates' influence, Kuen-siu improved his personalities, for example: *"They [my classmates] told me some of my gestures were very silly. So I want to change."*

According to Yin-ho, recently he had become more willing to share his feelings with his classmates and learnt how to show care to his classmates. On the other hand, because of the influence of his classmates and teachers, Yin-ho improved some of his behaviours, pointing out that:

*"I am more obedient...I am very quiet in class. Sometimes I am willing to do class work. I seldom shout in class now."*

### **4.3 A sense of belonging and security**

This section analyzes the informants' experiences at school. Specially, the focus of analysis is laid on their sense of security in the school setting as perceived by themselves in past years. There were many inaccurate facts about Star School; therefore, students' parents were quite worried when they knew that their children were admitted to Star School. This section provides evidence showing how parents' worries had been alleviated. There were not many informants who did not report any theft, vandalism or even bullying in their own experiences but most of the informants reported that only some mobile phones, books and some money were stolen. Reports on bullying were rather rare. Most of them still felt secure at school and it was also pointed out that the students had a sense of belonging so they would not do any damage to the belongings of their classes. It was also discovered the study participants could obtain a class identity and a strong sense of belonging.

#### **4.3.1 "Some classmates' mobile phones were gone."**

In fact, very few informants did not report any theft, vandalism or even bullying in their own experiences. However, most of the informants reported that some mobile phones, books and money were stolen. Reports on bullying were quite rare. Apparently, the informants perceived a sense of security in the school. The following are some examples.

Kei-hoi had not experienced any cases of theft himself but he said, *"Some classmates' mobile phones were gone...and some wallets,"* and when he was asked how often the case of this sort happened, he continued, saying, *"Not often...just a couple of times."*

Yan-ka had once got an unpleasant experience: "... *I have once experienced it [theft] myself. I have lost my purse and I could not find it in the end.*" She said she lost just about ten dollars in the previous year. She commented the case, saying, "*Personally, I don't think it is serious. Just from one case, I can't generalize the situation in this school.*" Yan-ka also reported a case of vandalism: "*Yes, sometimes we left our classrooms and when we came back, we found some of the desks in our classrooms damaged. Someone cut them with sharp things.*" However, she could not report any cases of bullying in the school.

Fai-shing told me of this amazing experience: "*Long time ago, I put my wallet in the drawer but my money was gone. Later, I found it again.*"

Ying-ka reported a similar case: "*My classmate [classmate's name] left her purse in the drawer but it was gone. A few days later, it was found again but the money had been taken away. Anyway, she did not think that it was serious.*"

#### **4.3.2 Bullying and damages made in school**

Only a case of bullying was reported to me. Ping-kwai told me that she was accused of bullying one of her classmates and she was warned by the police but she denied the charge. She really felt very upset about the accusation by the police:

*"...you see, I was taken to the police station, but I still denied in front of the police that I had beaten him [the student who reported to the police]. I had never beaten him. If I had done that, I would have confessed it...."*

In the analysis, it was very amazing to find that 'fighting' or 'bullying' was not a serious matter among the peers in the school. Ho-kwun reported that there were no cases concerning bullying but he pointed out that students liked to "*push and pull against*" each other. However, from the students' perspectives, this was only regarded as '*playing a game*'; in no case could it be regarded as '*fight*' or '*bully*'. He explained how '*play*' was different from '*fight*': "*I think when we 'play', we won't hurt our relationship*".

Wah-ka and Kei-hoi also reported that there was no bullying in the school and claimed that their classmates liked to “*push and pull against*” each other but they thought that it was just a type of game. Lai-ngai’s parents and friends were quite concerned about her safety in school but she replied to them lively, “*Very very happy...when I go to school.*”

On the other hand, from students’ perspectives, “*calling people’s name*” was not a sort of bullying. Ni-yi said students did not bully each other but they often called their names:

*“Actually, there is no fighting among students. They just play with each other, making jokes. It can’t be said they fight against each other... Well, we often call our classmates’ names. From Form 1 onward, we had been calling our classmates names. We all accept them. The nicknames have become the particular classmates’ codes.”*

There were also some reports on the damages of the furniture in each classroom but most of them thought that the windows, doors and the furniture were only carelessly damaged.

#### **4.3.3 Class identity being established—An analysis of school documents, in-depth interviews and a field visit**

The school documents, in-depth interviews and a field visit provide source of data for analysis in this section. This analysis is intended to confirm the study participants’ sense of belonging to the school, which had been identified in the interview data.

On reviewing the Action Plan of Invitational Education of Star School, 2003-2006 and paying field visits to the case study school, I discovered another inviting strategy that was employed by the school with a view to establishing class identities and eliciting a sense of belonging. In this strategy, a big picture of an animal, which represented the qualities of the students, was posted on the wall outside each classroom. The following are the field visit data. Animals representing the classes are shown below:

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*Class A [Form 3]*

*Goat: obedience, lovely, unity, active meek, responsible*  
*We were born in the year of goat.*

*Class B [Form 3]*

*Seal: We are sociable, enthusiastic, adorable and lively.*

*Class C [Form 3]*

*Cinnanon: We are quiet, lovely, diligent, and friendly and we like people*

*Class D [Form 3]*

*Monkey: We are lively, clever, energetic, and clever*

*Class E [Form 3]*

*Lion: We are fierce, persistent and creative.*

When asked about the informants' responses to the pictures during the in-depth interviews, some of them said the picture of the animal brought them good memories and a lot of fun. Some thought the pictures could really describe special qualities of their classmates and most of them were quite positive about the pictures. Some of the comments made by the informants are enumerated below:

*"It's a goat. It means that most of our classmates are clever. Goat is gentle but I am not gentle. I am a bit rude. So I try my best to be more obedient." (Ki-yuen)*

*"[Monkey] Very active, lively... and gregarious...At the beginning, I found it very funny but later we agree that we are really like the monkey." (Ying-ka)*



*"Someone said that we are like monkey because we are very naughty. I think it is positive...it implies that we are lovely. It [Monkey] is sometimes very obedient. When we are willing to be trained, we must be very successful because monkeys also perform in the circus." (Ping-kwai)*

*"When monkeys are naughty, it is a good reminder for us that we have to behave ourselves." (Ping-kwai)*

*"We are very active. It is a monkey. Very naughty, very energetic. It means that our classmates are energetic is good. But being naughty is bad." (Wah-ka)*

*"It's a seal. It means quiet....it is true because many teachers say that our class is very quiet." (Fung-wang)*

*"It [Cinnonon] represents happy and harmonious. I agree that classmates should get on well with each other ... We don't have prejudice against each other. We have a very good relationship." (Shing-siu)*

*"It's a seal. It means quiet...it is true because many teachers say that our class is very quiet." (Fung-wang)*

*"Well...[Seal] very lively... it is quite funny. Sometimes we are....it represents personalities of each classmate of our class...well...very happy about it." (Chun-kit)*

*"It's a seal. It brings people happiness...Very funny." (Ho-kwun)*

*"It is a seal...it represents hope...if we can't do our schoolwork well, we should still feel hopeful about ourselves." (Kuen-siu)*

*"We are like a seal...we like playing. We often create funny atmosphere in class so that we feel happier...not so boring in class." (Ni-yi)*

*"It [Lion] represents our fierce image. I remember the descriptions saying that we are very creative. I think so. Well, we are very creative." (Chiu-kwok)*

On visiting each Form 3 classroom [of Form 3 students of the cohort], I could see that each classroom was decorated, for example, putting a aquarium or some dolls that belonged to the students themselves in the classroom. In regard to the decoration of the classroom, Chiu-kwok claimed that his classmates would never damage their own things in the classrooms because they had developed a sense of belonging to their class. This analysis provides evidence about the study participants' sense of belonging to the school.

#### **4.4 Attitude towards school**

This section analyzes how the informants' parents, relatives and friends viewed the case study school before their children were admitted to the case study school; on the other hand, how the informants themselves viewed their own school after they had studied in the school for three years and how they felt when they knew that they were allocated to the present school through the Central Secondary School Places Allocation System in academic year 2003-2004.

Most of the parents did not think the present school was good because they were told that the reputation of the school was bad; the students there were very rather bad in academic performance and there was a lot of fighting among students. However, having learnt and lived in the present school for two or three years, all informants' had great change in their attitude towards the school and some of the parents also changed their attitude towards the school.

##### **4.4.1 "Was the school filled with academically low achievers and misbehaving students?"**

Kei-hoi's parents chose Star School for him as their top priority because: " *it [Star School] was not good in academic performance.*" Kei-hoi also agreed that the standards of his fellow schoolmates in Star School were rather low because he thought that even he was a rather weak and lazy student, he could obtain good marks in exams in this school as compared with his classmates.

Ping-kwai's mother had very bad impression about Star School and her harsh comments about the school really hurt her:

*"My mum once said, 'This [Star School] is a bad school. You can never get good academic performance here even you study hard...Those who are studying in this school are very useless and have no bright future'".*

When Ping-kwai violated some school rules and was complained by the school, her mother usually scolded her by saying this: *"the students in Star School are useless and they have no bright future"*. Because of this, she was really hurt: *"I felt very upset because I am her daughter and I am studying in this school."* However, Ping-kwai protected her school and pointed out some good things about her classmates at the same time, rather than blaming the responsibility on the classmates and the school:

*"This is my problem...I can't remember things well and teachers don't explain carefully to us."*

*"No, I don't agree with her [her mother] because in this school students are much better in running...sports than academic achievement.... As compared with other schools, we can outsmart them in sports."*

Although Ping-kwai often quarreled with her parents and was scolded by them because of bad behaviour, she really treasured the friendship in the school.

Kwan-shuk also had a very similar experience. Her parents thought that she was a student who was rather weak in academic performance and Star School had accepted such a bad student like Kwan-shuk ; therefore they concluded that Star School was a school accepting a lot of students with low academic standards. In fact, Kwan-shuk felt very upset and helpless when she knew that she was allocated to this school three years ago [2003] and she wished to change to another school: *"At that time, I was very small and my mother told me something bad about this school. I did [found another school] but I could not find another one...I had to accept the offer of the school place."* After three years, Kwan-shuk's attitude towards the school changed and she pointed out that there were both good and bad students in schools.

Discussing the choice of secondary schools, Fung-wang's primary school teachers did not recommend Star School to his parents because they thought that the students there were rather weak in academic achievement. Knowing that, Fung-wang really felt worried and helpless when he knew that he was allocated to the present school three years ago but his worry had disappeared then because: *"Perhaps, I have found this school different from what my primary school teachers said about it."* Fung-wang also argued that there was not a problem with the school because: "

*"...well, it all depends on the student himself. If you want to learn to be bad, then you will become bad easily but I don't think this is a bad school...I have made contact with them [my classmates]. I don't feel they are bad... The schoolmates...there should be one or two bad students in each school."*

#### 4.4.2 A correct choice!

Most parents did not have much reliable information about Star School. Consequently, they were quite worried about their children; on the other hand, their children felt upset and helpless when they knew that they were allocated to the school. However, having learnt and lived in the school for two or three years, all the informants' had a great change in their attitude towards the school and some of their parents also changed in their attitude towards Star School because they witnessed the positive changes of their children. For example, Yan-ka felt disappointed when she knew that she was allocated to the present school three years ago. However, she did not regret to have studied in this school for three years because:

*"Em...em...because in this school, I can show my strengths.... I can find myself in the library...my hobby....in fact, I got this habit long time ago."*

Ki-yuen's parents also had a bad impression about the present school three years ago but their view had changed:

*"...I have found that this school is much better than what people had commented on it."*

In the beginning, Fai-shing's parents considered Star School as bad but Fai-shing did not agree with them, based on his real experiences in the school in past years.

*"Parents think that this school is bad, maybe they know little about it. My academic performance is bad so I study in this school. I don't think they are correct. There are still some smart students in this school. So we don't need to say this is a good school and that is a bad school. Even for the students in bad schools, if they work hard, they will have achievement."*

Fai-shing also argued that teachers in this school were good and students should be responsible for their own learning and be actively involved in school activities.

*".... A good school does not mean that the teachers in that school are good. It is not good for the students to spend most of time studying, just only memorizing the contents of books. It's no use. There are in fact many activities in this school and teachers are not so bad. Actually, this is a good school.... many activities and the students are not so bad."*

Ying-ka was really disappointed when she knew that she was allocated to the present school because her parents said there were many misbehaving students; however, they had not really seen one there. Instead, in past years, she only encountered just a few misbehaving students in the school and she became more positive about her school life because: *"I have made more friends and enlarged my social circle."*

After being admitted to the school, Wah-ka had procured satisfaction in his school life, for example, prizes in sports and he claimed, *"I am more obedient now...I have improved in my academic performance, the exam results of many different subjects."* Therefore, Wah-ka's parents changed their view on the school because of his son's improvement in schoolwork:

Fung-kin felt frightened when he knew that he was allocated to this school because his parents was told that there was much fighting among students. However, according to Fung-kin, he had not seen a single case of fighting in school in past years and he pointed out that the information about the school was not reliable. On the other hand, Fung-kin's worry alleviated since he had spent years in the school and most importantly, he had developed good relationship with his schoolmates.

*"I felt a bit frightened when I first came to study in this school...but now I am less frightened.... We [classmates] get on quite well with each other."*

Lai-ngai's parents thought that it was a bad school as they said, *"The students use bad language and smoke."* In responding to her friends' concern, Lai-ngai gave a very firm answer that she had a happy school life and she had never seen students smoke: *"Before I came to study in this school, I felt that this was a bad school. Now I have been here with the classmates and teachers for several years. I found it was not too bad."* Instead, when Lai-ngai knew that she was allocated to this school, she felt very happy because she thought that the school standard would suit her abilities. Her attitude was rather different from the other informants.

Similarly, Chun-kit's parents were also told that there was fighting among students in this school and the students there were very lazy. However, in past years, he did not really witness a case of fighting but he really found that : *"Some students really don't study hard."*

According to Ching-ching, her parents' attitude had changed because:

*"In the beginning, they [my parents] thought that it [Star School] was a bad school and they were worried that my academic achievement would deteriorate gradually because I was not so bad in the primary school. Now they have changed their attitude towards it. I have understood English much better since I came to study in this school, you know, this school has upgraded as a higher band school [the school that usually accepts students with good academic achievement]."*

Like other students' parents, Ni-yi's parents considered Star School as a bad school in the very beginning. After Ni-yi had spent three years with the teachers, she found that her parents were wrong:

*"They [My parents] don't feel good about this school. Perhaps, they don't know much about it. But I think this is quite a good school. Teachers care about us. They do their jobs wholeheartedly...I would say to them, this school is good for me. I think I am destined to study in this school. Teachers are really good to me. I have also made many friends here."*

Chiu-kwok chose Star School on his own accord. His parents seldom complained about the school but his friends always said that students were bad in his school. He had a very strong response to his friends' offensive comments about his school:

*"There are some bad students in every school...you can't say that my school is bad."  
I think they [those who made negative comments about his school] intend to undermine the reputation of my school. They also want to create a bad self-image for me. I am studying in this school so they actually intend to say that I am a bad student."*

Moreover, Chiu-kwok reported to me about his parents' comments on the school:

*".... my parents feel that the teachers in this school are good. They usually come to visit the teachers on parents' days.... Yes, not too bad. [His parents thought] The teachers work hard. Well, it really depends on myself, whether I study hard or not."*

#### **4.4.3 Some criticism about school**

Although most informants held positive attitude towards Star School, there were a couple of complaints about it. For example, Ho-kwun felt bored about his school life because he found:

*"The rules about school uniform...very troublesome.... I have to repeat these things every day. [go to school to learn and go home]...just like a robot..."*

Kuen-siu complained about the long school days: *"Well, too late to leave school...then we can't relax."* Despite this, he could really understand that the teachers wished to spend extra time with students so that they could help them. He also thought the school had failed to help him develop his interest in computer because: *"... in school I just learn something like Word, PowerPoint and Excel. Recently I found designing web page more interesting."*

There were a couple of informants who complained that the schoolwork was too difficult for them and they felt very frustrated. For example, Ping-kwai's mother always scolded her about her poor schoolwork and Ching-ching was tired of learning. Regarding their expectations about the school, Ping-kwai agreed that school should organize more activities to develop students' interest and potential as she pointed out that some of her classmates could draw well although they were weak in schoolwork: *"I think the school hopes to help us discover our potentials that we have not shown to other people. Well, in fact, some students who do quite badly in schoolwork can perform quite well in drawing, or playing chess."*

#### **4.5 Expectations, personal aspiration and self-perception in ability and effort**

This section makes an attempt to analyze the expectations of the informants' parents on them; on the other hand, the informants' own personal aspirations and self-concept of ability and learning. It also analyzes the informants' perspectives on the goals of the school and the implementation of IE in the school.

As the interviews reflected, most of the informants' parents had very similar expectations on their children, that is, to complete Form 5 because they believed that having completed Form 5 or obtained higher qualifications could help them obtain a secure living in the future, or at least very easy and comfortable jobs. This section has also explored the informants' perspectives on goals of education. It was found that informants expected their school to help them develop good characters rather than upgrading their academic achievement. The data provides evidence to the evaluation of school policies and strategies through this analysis.

##### **4.5.1 Parents' expectations and students' personal aspirations**

Most of the informants' parents believed that having completed Form 5 or obtained higher qualifications could help their children find well-paid jobs, or at least very easy and comfortable jobs. Most of the informants accepted their parents' expectations. The following dialogue excerpts support the claim:



### *Common expectations*

*"I should study harder and find a well-paid job. My life won't be so difficult if I have a good job." (Wah-ka)*

*"They [my parents] hope that I can have a happy family and earn a lot of money." (Fung-kin)*

*"Working in the office may be much easier....the jobs of that kind that will be more comfortable because I do not need to run around." (Fung-wang)*

*"...it is easier to get a job [after completing Form 5]." (Ho-kwun)*

*"I study hard so that I can get a good job in the future." (Yin-ho)*

*"When I have got higher qualification, I don't need to do tough jobs." (Shing-siu)*

*"If I leave school with Form 3 standard, I cannot find a job. Form 5 school leavers can find jobs more easily." (Kwan-shuk)*

It was common that most informants expected to take up lucrative and easy jobs in the future. Shing-siu and Fung-kin were very typical examples.

*"I also think that I should study hard....study in a university. Then I don't need to work....for example, as a workman in construction sites." (Shing-siu)*

*"I hope I can work in a very large company and I can wear a business suit and carry a brief case when I go to the office. That means that I have got a well-paid job....earn a lot of money. And I can give money to my Mum...I can take care of my family." (Fung-kin)*

In addition to obtaining lucrative jobs in the future, some other personal aspirations were identified and depicted below:

***Procuring a sense of satisfaction***

Ki-yuen did not want to take up difficult jobs as her parents were doing. Instead, she expected to be a fashion designer because she had a sense of satisfaction when she saw people dress beautifully:

*“Beautiful...when I see people dress beautifully, I will be much happier.”*

***Taking up an respectable job—teacher***

Ping-kwai got much pressure from her parents and frequently had conflicts with her mother. Actually, she wished to take up a respectable job—a teacher: *“I wish to be a teacher...When I was small, I thought that a teacher was a sacred job,”* because she thought, *“This [a teacher] is a very important person who should help students learn and grow. We can’t do well without this person.”* She also found that a couple of her teachers had made the effort to help them.

Lai-ngai also wished to be a teacher because *“the teachers in this school care about their students very much. I do wish to care about other people”* and they *“respect their students...teach us what we don’t know...even if they teach the subjects they have not taught us before.”*

***Just expecting to be a good citizen***

Chiu-kwok said, *“I hope I can earn enough money to keep my wife and family. I wish I could do something that I find successful. I won’t do anything illegal to get money.”*

### ***Just expecting to be stable***

Fa-shing did not have special jobs on his mind but he said, *"I want to earn much money from my jobs."* Later on, he said that he wished to be a chef because *"Being a chef, I feel more stable, not be fired so easily."*

### ***Studying in university***

Very surprisingly, there were not many parents who expected their children to study in university, except Ki-yuen's, Yan-ka's and Ki-hoi's parents.

Ki-yuen's parents expected her to study in university because they believed that being a university graduate would have a better prospect. Ki-yuen accepted their expectation. All parents shared this similar opinion:

*"I need to study hard and they hope that I can study in university...I will have a good prospect in the future."* (Ki-yuen)

### ***A mother's basic expectation on her child—"You just earn a living for yourself."***

Ying-ka's mother had a very low expectation on her. She just expected Ying-ka to be able to earn a living for herself in the future, which was rather simple and pragmatic: *"In fact, my Mum does not expect me too much...she just expects me to study harder and in the future I can find a job and earn a living for myself."* Ying-ka knew that studying hard was important to her and she insisted that she should look after her parents in the future. This reflected she had a concept of Chinese filial piety.

#### **4.5.2 Discrepancies in expectations**

Some informants did not agree with their parents' expectations. As a result, the informants had conflicts with them or felt very frustrated about their expectations.

Ping-kwai's mother was not satisfied with the standards of Star School as well as Ping-kwai's own academic performance. She was very frustrated with their expectation indeed and she said:

*"They [my parents] intend to help me change to a better school before Form 4 so that I can keep up with my elder sister .... I agree but I can't do that."*

Similarly, Kei-hoi's parents thought the standard of Star School was rather low and they expected him to study in a university and change to a better secondary school because they thought: *"A better school may have better reputation....for example, teachers are much better,"* but he did not agree with them. Because of discrepancy in expectations, Kei-hoi's parents sometimes scolded him with foul language and they had quarrels over this issue. In fact, Kei-hoi wished to do something different. He wished to design the computer games because: *"After designing the products, I will have a sense of achievement, just like I have finished a jigsaw puzzle."*

Chun-kit expected to study in a vocational training school but his parents did not agree because they thought that it was very important for him to complete Form 5 in the first place. Because of it, he felt very hopeless: *"They said I will have no prospect if I study in a vocational training school...I felt very helpless."*

Fai-shing's father often badgered him to study harder but he thought that even he could complete Form 5, it might be quite a great task for him:

*"They [my parents] want me to complete Form 7 at least. Even university graduates cannot find jobs easily...some of them take up the jobs of cleaning the street. My mother often badgers me to study harder. They said to me, if I can't finish Form 5, what jobs can I do?"*

Shing-siu felt the pressure about his parents' expectation and he complained: *"I was happier in my primary school. When I was in primary school, parents did not give me too much pressure. But parents give me pressure in my studies now because I have to go to work after graduation [completing Form 5]."*

Yan-ka's parents expected her to study in university because: *"If I can't be promoted to Form 5, that means I can't be promoted to Form 7, then I can't be admitted to the university. After all, I can't look for jobs in the future."* In fact, Yan-ka had her own plan and expected to study veterinarian because she liked small animals.

#### **4.5.3 Informants' expectations or perspectives on the school and teachers**

This part analyzes the informants' expectations on the school and the teachers in terms of goals of education. Considering that the informants and their schoolmates of the same cohort had experienced IE since 2003, this section also aims to explore how the informants expected the school and teachers to help them learn and grow in the school through the implementation of IE. As the second major theme of this section, from the informants' perspectives, I would also like to analyze if the case study school and the teachers had achieved the expected goals as the informants described.

As the analysis reflects, most informants were concerned about the importance of cultivating students with correct values and attitudes and provision with structured learning experiences in the areas of moral, emotional and spiritual education rather than upgrading their knowledge and abilities, in particular, the knowledge from the textbooks or about examinations. According to the policies of Star School, Invitational Education should involve everyone success, help students develop their potential and cultivate good characters. Apparently, the study participants enjoyed a happy school life there in the past years.

The source of data involves only in-depth interviews and the informants' expectations are identified and explained in detail below:

### *Importance of values and attitudes*

Ki-yuen thought that the teachers should teach students to obey the laws and not to join the triad society:

*“The school should cultivate eminent students. Em...em...they should not be bad guys ...should not join the triad society. The school must ensure that there are no bad guys in school.”*

Ki-yuen suggested how the school and the teachers should teach students to observe the rules and to be obedient. Moreover, Ki-yuen pointed out: *“Teachers have taught us many standards of right behaviour....to be more positive and we should not give up doing things so easily...”*.

Regarding the goal of his school, Wah-ka emphasized that *“The school should care about students’ physical and psychological growth....students should not do illegal things after leaving school at least...They should learn something that they need in the future careers. They should also learn something useful to them in their workplace and community.... If we have good academic achievement, we can find jobs more easily.”* According to Wah-ka, he was quite satisfied with what he had learnt in the school: *“I have learnt the correct attitude towards life and how to communicate with people. I have also learnt how to do Mathematical problems...English....another foreign language for me to communicate with foreign people.”*

According to the analysis, Fung-kin was quite civic-minded because he expected : *“The school should teach us what to do in the future....teachers should teach us not to make friends with bad guys.”* He affirmed that the school had made an attempt to achieve the expected goal but some students failed to abide by the rules. He also found school examinations useful to him as he commented on his own performance: *“I study very hard....I have learnt a lot and worked hard on English.”* In addition to academic achievement, he thought that the school had helped them do their best through participating actively in the extra-curricular activities.

Fung-wang expected the school to teach students *“the purposes of coming to school...for example, students come to school to learn,”* because he found: *“...some students sleeping in class but teachers did not wake them up.”* Moreover, he expected his teachers to teach them in more interesting ways and encourage students not to give up so easily.

### ***Encountering future challenges***

Shing-siu expected the school *“to give opportunities to students to perform their abilities or help them develop their potentials so that they can do well in their future careers.”* According to Shing-siu, the school had achieved its goals through introducing extra-curricular activities because : *“...there are many activity clubs. Students have the freedom to join any clubs they like according to their own interest.”*

### ***Treasuring both good and bad students***

From Fai-shing’s perspective, teachers should not give up bad students as one of the goals of education: *“...Em...em...there may be some bad students in the school ...well, ..maybe members of triad society. The school should not ignore them. Instead, teachers should give them guidance and help them go back to the right track and become a good student finally.”* Fai-shing did not agree that the school should over-emphasize the importance of academic achievement and he thought that the school had done its best to help the underachievers.

### ***Academically low achievers should not be ignored***

Yan-ka was very sophisticated to urge that ALAs should not be ignored and be given more guidance through the operation of IE because: *“...students with low academic achievement can be helped to develop their intrinsic potentials. It is not necessary for them to have good academic achievement. They still have other potentials, for example, music.”* She said that she could develop her potential in reading skills because of the introduction of reading scheme in the school and the well-stocked school library.

Chun-kit also expected the school not to give up students of “*different abilities and background...teach good and bad students.*” He also showed appreciation to the school: “*Teachers give us tutorial classes...If we don’t understand, we can’t ask our teachers...I am satisfied with some teachers...despite being very busy, they will teach me.*”

### ***Positive attitude towards life and importance of personal growth and life skills***

Kwan-shuk expected her teachers to teach them “*about the positive attitude towards life.*”

Ying-ka thought that the school should teach students “*more things that we need to know when we become adults*”. Moreover, she thought that the school’s priority was to improve students’ conduct and behaviours. However, Ying-ka expected to learn emotion management skills in school so that she would control her temper. She thought she had improvement in managing her emotion after all: “*In the beginning, when the teacher scolded me, I thought that I must be right. But now I understand that I have really done something wrong and I apologize to the teachers. I have made improvement in this aspect.*”

Ping-kwai said the school should emphasize moral education because: “*it is important to... improve their [students’] conduct. If you behave badly, although you come from a good school, no one will accept you...a student’s academic achievement is very important but his behaviour and parents education are also important.*” However, according to her, the school had much emphasized the student academic achievement but ignored the students’ conduct and behaviours.

Ni-yi expected the school to teach them some life skills, in particular, communication skills as she said, “*Be honest, teaching us knowledge is important but it is also important for the school to teach us how to communicate with people....and how we should behave when we go to work in the future...this is the life. This should be taught to us...*”. Ni-yi found students in this school could develop their strengths through extra-curricular activities in the school, for example, she enjoyed the activities too, in particular, “the Adventure Ship” [*an outdoor activity aiming to boost participants’ self-confidence*], in which he learnt the importance of unity.



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### ***Respecting for others***

According to Ho-kwun, *“a good school should respect students’ opinions and rights...collect students’ opinions about our school and try the best to make improvement.”*

### ***Showing care and concern to weak students***

Yin-ho had this expectation: *“Teachers should teach students carefully so that they understand what teachers have taught them.....the main goal is help them learn.”* Moreover, he thought that: *“they [my teachers] can adapt their methods to help me...They teach us once again very slowly.”*

#### **4.5.4 Exploring informants’ self-perception in effort and ability**

Past studies state that ALAs usually have low self-esteem and low self-concept in effort and ability. Even worse, some have developed learner helplessness after encountering frustrations in learning. I was very keen on exploring the informants’ self-concept in effort and ability after they had been studying in Star School for three years.

As in-depth interviews reflected, most informants thought that their academic performances were rather unsatisfactory. For instance, Chiu-kwok’s academic results was very disappointing but he would never give up what he liked to do. Similarly, Yin-ho had really made the effort to study but he could not do well.

In contrast, Ching-ching thought she had a good memory and she was good at English but she had not made the effort to learn. Shing-siu said he was quick at learning but he was too proud and he did not study hard. He just did revision before exams. He did not work hard because he had no goals. He believed that goals made him work harder. Ying-ka thought her ability of learning was not too bad but she was lazy. She could do well if she had goals. Ho-kwun thought his academic performance was bad because he was lazy but his ability was not too bad. He could understand 50% of the lessons.

Although most informants said that they could not do their schoolwork well or their ability of learning was very poor, apparently, they had full conviction that diligence was more important than their ability of learning or intelligence. Moreover, when asked the reasons why they could not do their schoolwork well, most of them claimed that they had not made the effort to study and some said if they had worked harder, they would have done much better. It was only Ki-yuen who said she did not put effort in her studies but she had luck in the exams. Some of the significant dialogue excerpts that support the above claim are depicted below:

*"....diligence is more important. If you can do something, you work harder and you can do it at last." (Yin-ho)*

*"...I think diligence is more important than the ability of learning....It really depends on our hard work" (Kuen-siu).*

*"The ability of learning just deals with studies but we can work hard in every aspect so we need diligence" (Kwan-shuk)*

*"I think diligence is more important. If you are smart and you work hard, then you will have better achievement. Mmmm, I often don't understand the lessons but if I do revisions and finally I can get it. (Fung-wang)*

*"Effort is more important. You are not clever but if you study harder, you can still do well. (Fai-shing)*

*"Diligence is the most important. If you don't know the methods, you can't do well even though you are very talented. Diligence may make us succeed and if you work hard at the same time, you can do much better finally. (Wah-ka)*

#### **4.6 Learning**

This section describes and analyzes the informants' learning experiences, both successful and unsuccessful experiences, their learning problems, in particular, their frustrations about learning; attitude towards learning and their self-concept of effort and ability.

On analyzing the in-depth interviews with the informants, it was found that teachers' encouragements and students' sense of achievement had elicited proactive learning behaviours. The data collected through participation observations coincided most of the data obtained through in-depth interviews, in particular, students of the cohort preferred outdoor activities to boring classroom learning, for instance, they obtained very useful information about the universities and higher institutions through project work. As a result of the project, they could explore their choices in studies and careers. (*Refer to Appendix 11 for the observation reports*). In connection with this, most informants set their common goals—to be promoted to Form 4 and to complete Form 5.

#### 4.6.1 Learning should be fun

Most informants liked the subjects which they found easy or they had a lot of fun with it, for example, Yan-ka liked Geography because "*Geography seems easy because we learn it from something simple.*" On the other hand, Ki-yuen said, "...*Teachers should tell us more jokes.*"; and Ying-ka said, "[Teachers should] *Teach us in interesting ways and introduce more activities to the lessons. They should sometimes tell us stories so that we can understand the contents much better.*" Regarding activities, most students liked having physical movement during lessons and several informants liked doing experiments in Science lessons. A couple of informants liked watching educational TV programmes. Girls usually liked cookery in Home and Economics lessons.

The following dialogue excerpts exhibit more about different informants' illustrations on how interesting they found learning their favourite subjects:

*It [reading] is like an essential nutrient for my spirit... During the recess...after the lessons, I do some reading then I feel relaxed and I don't feel bored...I can increase my knowledge.*" (Yan-ka)

*"Its [History] content....the war...the reasons for the war... When the lesson finishes, I expect another lesson to come much more earlier...I like watching war films."* (Fung-wang)

Ni-yi liked to play interesting, competitive games in class and she wanted to outsmart the other classmates in the activities:

*"They [my classmates] want to outsmart other people, for example, we expect our class to win in competitions." (Ni-yi)*

#### **4.6.2 Learning for the future**

Needs elicit self-driven learning behaviour. Considering Yan-ka's case again, she enjoyed reading because she could get access to a variety of knowledge through reading, which prepared her for her future careers:

*"There is a variety of knowledge; sometimes when people ask me questions, I can answer them....In some kinds of jobs, like teachers, students may ask many different questions, and you have to know how to answer their questions."*

Although Fung-kin and Yin-ho found it very difficult to learn English, they took a serious attitude towards it as Yin-ho said, *"A policeman writes his report in English.... People in the office use English ...and the lawyers also use it."*

Similarly, Fung-kin mentioned the importance of learning English:

*"English is useful when we talk with people in English. It is good for communication," and "I can find jobs more easily with good English standard."*

Kuen-siu expected to have some career-related experiences with computer in school because he found computer very important to his future careers:

*"I am very interested in computer and I want to learn more about it. Moreover, many things in the world will be computerized. In the workforce, there is a great demand for the computer personnel. I think the prospect is quite good and I am very interested in it."*

Yan-ka, Yin-ho and Kuen-siu exhibited active learning behaviours because they found the subjects important to their future careers. In contrast, irrelevancy would deter learning. Ho-kwun did not like World History because he had problems remembering the historical characters and they were not related to his daily lives. For example,

*“Well, it [World History] is too long. I will have a headache when I study it. I have never heard of the historical characters.”*

#### **4.6.3 Learning and frustration**

To most informants, learning was not fun in the least because most of them had very unpleasant learning experiences. In the interviews, I deliberately analyzed the informants' experiences about learning. The following excerpts have explored informants' substantial learning experiences:

Yan-ka found it difficult to learn Mathematics and she felt inferior to other students because most classmates could follow the subject except her:

*“Because I have poor foundation in it [Mathematics] and I cannot understand the teacher. I feel very bored and I can't understand it but the other classmates can understand it.”*

Fai-shing felt frustrated with his schoolwork, especially Mathematics and he had once contemplated to give it up because: *“I don't understand...I can't remember...for example, Mathematics. I find it very troublesome to do the Mathematical problems. I don't want to do them.”* As for English, in the beginning, he found his English teacher very troublesome because she kept him after school, asking him to do the dictations. Later, he found he had made improvement in English and he began to take her teacher's advice. The following is his reflection:

*“I don't know if I had any improvement but my mood has really changed. At least I have become more positive about studying.”*

Ying-ka did not like memorizing mathematical formulae because she found them very complicated and also she found the school curriculum very boring. Therefore, she felt very fatigued during the school time:

*"Very tired too....I just want to sit down, without doing anything [after coming to the school]...The school curriculum is not so attractive.... Very often I make the effort to listen to the teachers but I can't understand."*

Ping-kwai pointed out that she really wanted to learn but she could not. In fact, she knew that her future careers would require high qualification and she suffered great pressure in her studies:

*"...Fear... I am afraid that I will fail and I can't be promoted to Form 4...Because the basic qualification for a job is Form 5. If I don't have Form 5 qualification, I won't have good prospect in the future."*

Ping-kwai felt very helpless in learning. Moreover, her mother gave her great pressure in her studies. She often had quarrels with her mother and cried because of it.

*"... Mum said to me, "Study harder! You do so badly. How can you find a good job in the future? It is not important for you to support a family but you need to support yourself at least!"*

Chun-kit had difficulty reading both Chinese and English. He would fall asleep when he started to do the reading and he thought he was helpless. Yin-ho was also rather weak in English, in particular, the spelling of words and pronunciation and he felt inferior about it: *"Em...em...I feel quite bad...the other classmates know it well but I can't...I can't remember the words."*

#### **4.6.4 Development of learner helplessness**

In the past, Ho-man was very persistent in producing good drawings. When Ho-man was small, he was very interested in drawing and persistent in producing good works. He enjoyed his own works too although they were seldom praised. Recently, he quitted his hobby and never drew again because his classmates often

laughed at his works, which they thought did not look like the objects he intended to draw. It was the unpleasant experience that Ho-man encountered had killed Ho-man's interest in drawing.

This analysis can indicate that learning is certainly difficult for some students but, in fact, not all informants felt frustrated with it. For example, although Ho-kwun found it tough to learn English, he could still sustain his interest in learning it because he could acquire a sense of satisfaction:

*"I have found it interesting to learn English...We can change words but their meanings are the same...A rather tough task, especially I need to remember the tenses.*

#### **4.6.5 Successful learning experiences**

It was rather difficult for most of the informants to share with me their successful experiences in academic learning until and unless I elicited their vivid responses by asking them exploratory questions or allowing them more time to think about their responses. The following examples can provide further elaborations about their learning experiences:

Fai-shing obtained a sense of control on English so he was more persevered in learning English:

*"Em...em...I think I am more persevered with English now but I won't spend time on Mathematics. Perhaps, there are a lot of changes in Mathematics and I think I can have a sense of control on English...Reading comprehension...in the exams, I got good marks in it."*

Ping-kwai was liable to give up doing things when encountering difficulties: *"Em...em...I give up doing things easily. When I can't do things well, I will give up immediately."* However, on one occasion, with a clear goal for herself and her teacher's encouragement, she endeavoured to get good marks in the exams. She was so

excited that she screamed. That would certainly be the starting point for her to strive for better results in the future and the following excerpt explains how she had changed:

*“So I stayed in school to have tutorial classes and did revision at home. Finally, I passed it and Miss Na [teacher’s name] was very satisfied with my progress, too. I was so happy that I screamed.”*

Wah-ka found learning English difficult because of the vocabulary problems. However, he did not feel frustrated. On the other hand, he liked Mathematic because he found it very challenging and he could be trained up in his “*ability of thinking and analysis*” Moreover, he could acquire a sense of competence in learning Mathematics because he had discovered new formulas by himself to get the correct answers more easily. He described the process of learning Mathematics below:

*“It [Matheatics] is very challenging to me. There are some difficult and easy mathematical questions. Well, very difficult...I have to spend very long time to solve the problems.*

*“Em...very excited...very keen to get the answers...Some classmates can get the answers very easily but I don’t know why I can’t. I feel very excited about it.*

*“I expect to get a new formulae....a simple method...so I can use it to get the answers more easily..., it is important because I can save much more time while taking examinations.”*

Fung-kin made a good progress in English and after that he became more enthusasitc to learn it. He was also very satisfied with the progress of Mathematics as he said, “*When I was in primary school, I never passed it [Mathematics]*”. According to him, he had really put effort on it and Miss Na [her Mathematics teacher, a pseudonym] had also helped him a lot in tutorial classes after school.



Lai-ngai became more proactive in learning Mathematics: *"I asked questions in the lessons but I asked more questions in the Mathematics lessons, even more quickly and also I could finish the class work very quickly."* She ascribed her improvement to this: *"...perhaps...the teachers adapt their teaching methods according to our standards"*.

Regarding non-academic performance, Lai-ngai was very more persistent in learning volley ball: *"I paid much attention to the teacher [the teacher teaching Physical Education] when she demonstrated to us how to play it...I try very hard to remember how to play it and then I repeat practising the procedures on my own."* She thought she could develop her potential in it.

Similarly, except for non-academic performance, Kei-hoi also got a sense of achievement in playing computer games because he had won many other competitors. As a result, he was most eager to practise it more frequently and he told me the reason for his success: *"Practice makes my fingers work very quickly."* However, because of his indulgence in computer games, he had much conflict about it with his parents.

Yan-ka discovered that her reading skills were comparatively better than her classmates: *"I can know the words that other classmates don't know... I have found I can read the passages of the text book much faster than other classmates."* She thought she had great potential in this aspect, which she was proud of.

Although Chun-kit thought he was helpless with his studies, he had once made an attempt to study hard because: *"I want to be promoted to Form 4...I played computer games and watched TV less frequently."* On striving for good marks in English Dictation, Chun-kit changed his study skills and worked very hard. Finally, he got 100 marks in it. With a sense of satisfaction, he shared his excitement with me about his Dictation results:

*"At first, it was difficult for me, then I changed my study skills. When I tried to remember the spellings of the words, I copied them on paper with a pen."*

Most informants often experienced frustration in learning but a couple of informants complained that what they were currently learning was too easy for them. Ping-kwai did not find the cookery lessons challenging to her and Kuen-siu found the curriculum of Computer Literacy too simple for him. Actually, he wanted to learn about the hardware of computers, computer programme and the design of computer games.

#### **4.6.6 Attitude towards learning and striving for the common goal**

Among the informants, Ching-ching, Ni-yi, Fung-kin and Ying-ka are typical examples showing how they had changed their learning attitude.

Ching-ching told me in an exciting tone, *“In the past, I just passed very few subjects, for example, Chinese. In Form 1, I became to understand English lessons much more. I think that I have improved English now.”* She made a good progress because she had changed her attitude towards learning:

*“In the past, I seldom gave correct answers to teachers. But now I can answer the teacher’s questions at least. In the past, it was impossible for me to get a pass in primary school, just about 20 marks. Now I can pass it at least.”*  
*“In the past, when I had English lessons, I felt very tired but now I am very refreshed in class.”*

After determining to be promoted to Form 4, Ni-yi started to study hard by attending tutorial classes offered by her teachers: *“Before the first examination, I didn’t like to join any tutorial classes in the past but this time I joined the Mathematics tutorial classes together with my classmates.”* This analysis reflects that persistence is a key issue to students. For example, Ni-yi finally gave up attending the classes because she lacked persistence.

Fung-kin also claimed he had changed his attitude towards learning: *“I did not do quite well last term but I did well this term. I have made improvement in them.”* He got a sense of success after he had made progress with English and Mathematics. He also thought that promoting to Form 4 was important to him. If not, he could not find jobs after graduation.

Many of Ying-ka's classmates wished to be promoted to Form 4 and they knew that there would be a keener competition in Form 4 so all of them studied hard to achieve their goal. Ying-ka really felt the pressure under the positive learning environment:

*"Because I see that everyone starts working very hard and I am afraid that I can't keep pace with them."*

In this analysis, it was quite obvious that promoting to Form 4 became a common goal for the students and a positive learning atmosphere had obviously formed. As discussed earlier, it was also discovered that the positive social relationships in school had elicited group dynamics that facilitated them to achieve the common goal.

#### **4.6.7 Out-of-classroom learning and experiential learning**

During primary and secondary schooling, students encounter various types of life events at different stages of their personal and social development. Through different types of life events in school, students will envisage five learning experiences that correspond to the 'moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic' development in the aims of education. On the other hand, teachers should utilize this life approach to facilitate their students to understand their personal experiences and reflect upon the values and attitudes embedded in the life events (Curriculum Development Council, 2001).

After reviewing Portfolio of Invitational Education Programmes of Star School, it was found that some significant life events were found related to the study and it was worth investigating. The following programmes were implemented as part of IE strategies in Star School and identified to be related to the present study:

1. Multiple Intelligence Challenge Training Camp and Student Camp for Class D
2. Volunteers Training and Voluntary charitable services
3. Project Learning
  - The Project Day for the Cohort—"Careers and Further Studies"
  - Life-wide Learning Activities in English Language—A Visit to Science Museum, Hong Kong
4. Form 3 Inter-class Competitions—"Grandpriz"
5. Fashion Show-A post-exam activity for Form 3 Cohort

All these life events were intentionally designed and implemented particularly in this Form 3 cohort as part of IE programmes. The student life events were not meant to be encountered by the 20 informants involved in the in-depth interviews only but also by the Form 3 students of the same cohort (i.e. 147 study participants), of which the data were respectively collected through the participant observations, on-the-spot interviews, questionnaires and document review in addition to the core analysis of the in-depth interviews. In the in-depth interviews, informants concerned claimed that they found the life events in connection with the above-said school programmes unforgettable or important to them in their school life. Therefore, the analysis aims to examine how the study participants reacted to these activities or school events and how their learning was influenced by them.

#### **4.6.7.1 Student training camps**

In the in-depth interviews, most of the informants pointed out "The Multiple Intelligence Challenge Training Camp" was the most unforgettable school event in past years. Therefore, it is worth analyzing the informants' experience with this school event. The Intelligence Challenge Training Camp was held in February 2003 organized and financially supported by the Education and Manpower Bureau [renamed as 'Education Bureau' since 2007]. The purposes of the camp were to train up the participants [study participants were in Form 1 in 2003/2004] with self-confidence and independence. There were very meaningful life events in the camp, through which the participants had learnt some useful life skills, communication skills, map reading, knotting, making a raft and developed very positive attitude towards life. Another activity that was mentioned by the informants

of Class D was the student camp organized by the classmates of Class D exclusively. They also found this event very unforgettable. They reported what they had learnt was quite similar to those that were learnt in the Multiple Intelligence Challenge Training Camp.

The following findings, which are the results of the analysis involving only in-depth interviews, were compared with the informants' expectations on the school and most of them had been fulfilled.

### ***Unity is strength***

In Multiple Intelligence Challenge Training Camp, through different life events, Ping-kwai found that unity was very important to them. Wah-ka also realized the importance of unity and he learnt some survival skills, for example, "...we learnt how to use the map and we had to wash our clothes ourselves." He was very self-reflective because he found it very important and efficient to attend carefully to the training officer and if he wished to follow their instructions accordingly.

Regarding team spirit or co-operation, Wah-ka gave me a very vivid description about the importance of unity and sharing of responsibilities among team members themselves and how co-operation could enhance learning in school:

- Researcher* : *Anything you learnt that is very important to you [in the camp]?*  
*Wah-ka* : *Unity is very important.*  
*Researcher* : *What is the importance of unity to you?*  
*Wah-ka* : *Because...as a [Chinese] story tells, a single branch of a tree can be broken easily but a bunch of branches can't be broken easily.*  
*Researcher* : *Good, but is unity related to your studies in school?*  
*Wah-ka* : *Yes, yes. Only one person can't think the solutions up but when many people discuss the problems together, they will become very simple and the solutions will be worked out very quickly.*

Similarly, Ping-kwai learnt that co-operation could facilitate them to solve problems. She said, *"Unity is very important. If we were not co-operative, the training officer [of the training camp] would continue to demand us to strive for the goal he set for us. So we became more co-operative after the camp."*

After the camp, Ying-ka came to realize that having a common goal would generate group dynamics. Through life events in the camp, she discovered the importance of self-cultivation and self-discipline:

*"We have to do the same activities together... We need to help each other. In the camp, only one person could not finish the tasks. Everyone should work together so that great dynamics could be created."*

In the training camp, Chun-kit prized co-operation and team spirit. He told me what he learnt in the student camp was very important to his future careers: *"When I leave school and go to work, I understand what team spirit means... So I will work harder and I won't be so sluggish in the future."* Moreover, he said he also realized the importance of adopting a proactive attitude towards his future careers.

***Developing courage—"Without bravery, how can you achieve your goals?"***

Ho-kwun could not procure a sense of success in his schoolwork but he could obtain a very successful experience in the camp. He mentioned an activity in the camp, saying, *"Just the case when I walked through the crematory [the graveyard] alone."* In this activity, he successfully walked through the graveyard alone in the dark. He thought courage and bravery was very important to him as he came to realize this: *"Without bravery, how can you achieve your goals?"*

*"I feel that I was really brave [in the camp],"* said Ching-ching with a smile of satisfaction on her face when she was describing her experience in the camp. She also learnt some practical life skills and developed her personal characters.

### ***Achieving personal goal***

In the training camp, as part of the training programmes, the participants learnt to set goals for their future. *“My goal?...Don’t play computer games too often, work hard to pass more subjects in exams,”* Fung-kin, as one of the participants, had to set such a goal so that he would study harder. Finally, he could achieve his goals at the end of the term.

### ***Applying team spirit to classroom learning***

Ching-ching learned in this camp that team spirit was very important and she described below how she could apply the team spirit to classroom learning:

*“Team spirit...it’s important, for example, in English lessons, we were divided into two groups. We had to answer the teacher’s questions and got scores if our answers were right. If we gave wrong answers, then our team would lose the competition. Then we had a sense of guilt...”*

### ***Self-caring and independent***

Wah-ka appreciated the care afforded by his parents. However, in the training camp, he had to wash his clothes by himself and he realized the importance of independence:

*“I had to take care of myself [in the camp]...When I leave school and work, my parents can’t take care of me forever.”*

### ***Healthy lifestyle***

Ping-kwai gained a lot from the training camp although it was very tough for her. She had such a good memory about the camp and we had much better friendship. Most importantly, *“... I discovered that doing more exercise really did me good.”*

Kit-chun also developed a good habit of getting up early and eating breakfast during the stay in the training camp because he found eating breakfast would give him

more energy. He said, "...*I felt much more refreshed and awake in the morning [having eaten breakfast]*". However, he gave up this habit after leaving the camp.

### ***Be positive and committed***

*"After that [the training camp], I knew that if we don't make the effort, we can't gain anything,"* said Ping-kwai, realizing an important attitude towards life, which might be very conducive to her future development.

*"I need to contribute something before I can gain something."* This was Yin-ho's reflection after the training camp so he found the camp valuable to him.

### ***Assuming leadership in the future***

Fung-kin learnt leadership skills in the training camp: *"In school, I just learn from the books."* He also found the tasks in the training camp *"tough but unforgettable"*.

The training officer told Fung-kin to lead the tattooing [in the training camp]. Taking on the responsibility, he felt like *"being very powerful...but if I did wrongly, I would feel guilty"*. He also learnt to be patient and attentive, which made him realize that they were very important pre-requisites to effective classroom learning.

Similarly, Ching-ching also discovered her potential in leadership in the camp and also improved her social skills. Showing a feel of satisfaction on her face, she said:

*"After the camp [training camp], I became braver. I dare to speak in front of the class now. When I was in Form 1, it was too frightened for me to speak in public. Now I felt that I had good leadership skills because I found I could train the members of the cheering team [for the Sports Day] quite properly."*



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***Developing social responsibility—caring, commitment, service and contribution***

Through charitable voluntary services guided by her teachers, Ki-yuen recognized her role and responsibilities as members of the society and show concern for their well-being. She really obtained a sense of satisfactory in the process of helping the elderly. Sharing her experiences with her participation in voluntary services, she said, “....*I think I am interested in it [voluntary services]. Every time the voluntary services were different and I found them challenging...it was fresh to me.*” She also found the voluntary services conducive to the development her characters because:

*“I am braver....When I gave out the flowers [for donation purpose], I had to tell them which charitable organization I was working for....well, quite many words to say for me.”*

*“I learnt to enhance my courage through dancing and I could communicate much better with people. I realized that my body language could help me communicate with people.”*

Ki-yuen could relate what she had learnt in the voluntary services to classroom learning. She became to take the initiative to ask questions in class:

*“I have become braver to raise my hands and answer my teachers’ questions. When I go to work in the future, it will be impossible for me to hide myself at a corner. In fact, I need courage to do many things.”*

The following excerpts illustrated how students who could not do well in schoolwork had cultivated caring and commitment to the community through their participation in voluntary charitable services. According to Yin-ho, he was quite mischievous in class. He shared his pleasant experience in his voluntary services:

*“I was brave to ask the old woman’s questions and listen to them...I asked her what things needed repairing at home and I wrote down her request. Then I reported it to the social worker [who guided the service].”*

Yin-ho also learnt something that he could not learn in the school text-books—he had become more caring:

*“I learnt how to care about people...If I find classmates very sad, I will ask them what have happened to them.”*

Serving in the community could help Kwan-shuk develop a sense of responsibility, caring and commitment. She also learnt how to respect others. Doing the charitable services, Kwan-shuk also obtained a sense of satisfaction:

*“I got a sense of satisfaction from the activity...I didn’t ask people for money. I gave them flags [for donation purpose] and they donated some money...I need to be courteous...em...em... not too rude to people...at least I know I should say, “Thank you.”*

With teacher’s encouragement, Ho-man participated in voluntary services, through which he could procure a sense of achievement as well as cultivating commitment to the community.

*“Doing voluntary work...I have a sense of achievement when I can do it...when I could sell flags to people [requesting donation].”*

Participating in the voluntary services, Kuen-siu had to get to the old people’s flats and helped them clean their flats. During the services, he came to realize an important philosophy of life:

*“Well... I could experience that when you are old, you can’t do most of the things you want. So when I am old, I will be very pitiful...It made me decide that I needed to learn how to do the housework.”*

#### 4.6.7.2 Volunteers training and voluntary service—An analysis of questionnaire data

According to the in-depth interviews with Yuen-ki, Yin-ho, Ho-man, they enjoyed and learnt a lot from the charitable voluntary services. As part of triangulation process, a field visit was made to the Volunteers Training Day, which was held on the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2006. On that day, 25 Form 3 students (2005-2006) joined in a training session in the morning and then they went to a public housing estate, where many elders were accommodated alone there. With the accompany of the teachers and social workers, they visited the elders and helped them with the housework, for example, cleaning the windows and floors. I spent about two hours with the study participants in the training sessions in Star School. (*Refer to Appendix 11 for the detailed field notes*).

After the charitable services, the participants were required to complete a short questionnaire, asking them what they had learnt in the activity and how they felt about the activity. (*Refer to Appendix 8 for the sample questionnaire*). The following questionnaire feedbacks from the study participants are provided for triangulating what Yuen-ki, Yin-ho and Ho-man had said about the voluntary services in the in-depth interviews:

*“I can help the elderly. I learnt how to do housework. I will help my mum with her housework. I felt very happy” (a male respondent).*

*“I contributed love and time to this activity. I learnt how to talk with the old people and how to clean the windows. I felt happy.” (a male respondent).*

*“I contributed time and energy to this activity. I learnt how to talk with people. Team work is very important and we can help people. I had helped people with the house work. It is an unforgettable experience. I seldom do housework. Now I can help old people do housework.” (a male respondent).*

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*“The old couple let me see their family photos. I was very happy. It was an unforgettable experience to clean the toilet for the old people. I felt very tired but I was very happy. I learn how to communicate with people.” (a female respondent)*

*“I learnt how to do the cleaning. I learnt leadership skills in this activity because I was a team leader. I learn how to care about people.” (a female respondent).*

In sum, based on the in-depth interview data and questionnaire data, it can be claimed that the study participants found the activity interesting and useful to them even though some of them felt tired. Most importantly, they learnt how to care about people and how to communicate with people. Their feedbacks provide further evidence to claim that some of their expectations on the school had been fulfilled.

#### **4.6.7.3 Project learning**

According to Portfolio of Invitational Education Programmes of Star School, project learning is the core programme of IE in Star School. It is an interactive way of learning, which is highly recommended by the government officials and educational professionals. It involves students’ active participation and collaboration. Teachers’ support is also very important.

In this analysis, two project learning programmes were identified to be related to the Cohort of Form 3 and the analysis involves participation observations and informal interviews and a survey:

- I. The Project Day for the Cohort—“Careers and Further Studies” (2005-2006)
- II. Life-wide Learning Activities in English Language (a visit to Space Museum, Hong Kong, 2005-2006)

## **I The Project Day for the cohort—"Careers and Further Studies" (2005-2006)—An analysis of participant observation data**

The school project days for the cohort took place in Hong Kong Federation of Youth Group Jockey Club Sai Kung Outdoor Camp between April 6, 2006 and April 7, 2006. All Form 3 students of the cohort [147 study participants], who were guided by their class-masters, had to attend the activity. The programmes in these two days involved project presentations, group activities and some recreational activities, for example, barbecue.

During the stay with the cohort, I observed 10 presentations. I was very keen on collecting data about what they learnt in the project and they felt about it. Based on the presenters' oral reports on their projects, a summary was made on the two focuses: what they learnt and how they felt about the project:

### ***What they learnt or procured in the process of Project***

1. this project being a good opportunity for them to explore their choices in studies and careers until it was too late to make their decisions
2. feeling very uncomfortable when doing the interviews but interview skills could be practised
3. becoming braver and more open in front of strangers
4. learning to design questionnaires and interview questions and also present the relevant findings using a computer software—PowerPoint
5. learning something that they could not learn from the text-books e.g. interview skills and communication skills
6. learning problem solving skills because they encountered difficulties and conflicts among members during the process (*for the full report, refer to Appendix 11*)

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### ***How study participants felt about the project***

1. co-operation among group members was very important in the completion of the whole project.
2. making decisions to study hard and pursue studies in universities
3. complaining about the project being very difficult and time-consuming for students
4. finding the project useful and interesting and determining to finish it and produce good reports as far as possible
5. determining to obtain higher qualification to fulfill the admission of requirements of desirable universities and institutions (*for the full report, refer to Appendix 11*)

## **II Life-wide learning activities in English Language—A visit to Space Museum, Hong Kong, 2005-2006)**

In line with inviting philosophy, there was a consensus among the English teachers of Star School that life-wide learning activities were worth organizing as these could help motivate students to learn the language in more interesting ways.

On March 21, 2006, a visit to Hong Kong Science Museum was arranged for the cohort [147 study participants] as a wild-life learning activity in English Language. The visit started from 2 o'clock in the afternoon and finished at 5 o'clock in the evening and I participated in the whole school event. In this school event, I obtained more understanding about how ALAs learnt in projects.

*(For the detailed observation report, please refer to Appendix 11 ).*

I accompanied the cohort during the visit, observing how the students learnt and interviewing some of them with a focus on their attitude and their feedback on this event.

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***An analysis of on-the-spot interviews with study participants about the visit to Space Museum***

During the visit, I conducted very short unstructured interviews with some of the students at random with a focus on how they felt about the visit. The following is the summary of their feedback about the visit.

1. not understanding what to do on the worksheets
2. preferring to study outside the school rather than learning in school
3. feeling very bored to learn and sleepy in the classrooms
4. learning something that could not be learnt from the text-books in the museum
5. finding it more interesting to learn in the museum
6. finding the visit worthwhile although they needed to pay for the travelling expense and spending extra time travelling to the museum

***An analysis of survey result and report on the visit to Space Museum, Hong Kong (Questionnaire data provided by the case study school).***

A questionnaire was conducted by the teachers on evaluating the visit to Space Museum. Parts of the survey results were provided by the Quality Circle and shown as follows:

86% of participants reported that the activity was interesting. Moreover, 68% of them reported that the activity was useful to them.

In sum, comparing the observation data with the survey data, it was obvious that study participants preferred out-of-classroom learning activities to desk-bound learning mode in the classrooms.

#### **4.6.7.4. Fashion Show for Form 3 cohort (post- exam activity)—An analysis of participant observation data**

According to the inviting strategies of Star School, students were encouraged to learn through a variety of activities so as to enrich their experiential learning experiences, successful experiences and enhance social relationships in school. This analysis involves only participation observation.

With a view to augmenting understanding about the study participants' school life, I attended the 'Fashion Show' and conducted an observation. On 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2006 a "Fashion Show" (for Form 3 cohort) was organized by the study participants in the school hall as a post-exam activity. The theme of the show concerned "Environmental Protection"; therefore, all the materials used in the show were something that had been used before and become useless then, for example, old clothes, soft drinks cans, etc. and the designs of the clothing should highlight the importance of environmental protection and the dynamics of people. I attended the programme with the focus of observation: the creativity of the study participants.

From this activity, it was realized that the study participants could demonstrate their creativity in the designs of their clothing and their organization skills although they could not do well in their normal schoolwork.

#### **4.6.7.5 Grand Priz (Form 3 Inter-class Competition)—An analysis of questionnaire data**

The teachers of the Quality Circle worked closely together with other departments of the school to organize various types of inter-class competitions for the study participants, which aimed to enhance students' experiential learning experiences, successful experiences and social relationships in school. There were a series of competitions throughout the school terms, for example, Chess Competition, Fashion Show, Bulletin Board Design Competition, Basketball and Football Competitions, etc. To collect observation data, on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2006, I attended one of the competitions—Bulletin Board Design Competition. The competitors were found very co-operative. According to the in-depth interview with Chiu-kwok, that his class really wished to win this competition so they worked very co-operatively.



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A survey report about the study participants' feedback on Grand Priz, which the Quality Circle tendered for my reference, is shown below:

88% of the respondents agreed that the programmes facilitated a sense of belonging.

90% of the respondents agreed that the programmes encouraged co-operation among students of the same class.

93% of the respondents agreed that the programmes encouraged social relationships.

85% of the respondents agreed that the programmes enhanced their sense of success.

The above survey data can reflect that study participants found the activities conducive to the development of peer relationships and enhancement of successful learning experience, which undoubtedly support my observation and the interview data (*Refer to Appendix 7 for the sample questionnaire*).

#### **4.7 Summary of major findings**

The findings of the triangulated data, mainly collected from the study participants' interviews, questionnaires, document review as well as participant observations, are summarized in this section and interim conclusions are also drawn from the findings.

##### **4.7.1 Positive aspects identified by the study participants**

###### ***People and relationships in the case study school***

Study participants were praised by teachers and thus they always expected something positive to happen in school. They played ball games and did revisions with classmates after school. They were very happy to see classmates at school and enjoyed talking with their peers at school. Their classmates were very helpful and supportive and they were willing to share their feelings with them. They showed appreciation to people who looked after the school greenery environment, in particular, the plants and flowers and they also showed appreciation to friendly school prefects

and the school guard greeting them at the school entrance. The school staff were also found very friendly. Study participants felt bored at home and they would miss teachers, classmates during long holidays.

### ***Environment***

Study participants found open spaces, fresh air and greenery environment available. Their mood changed when they saw beautiful flowers and plants. When coming back to school, some of them felt like being at home. There were a lot of good memories about classrooms. The school provided good support equipment and facilities, for example, the school library, the laboratory and the computer hard wares.

### ***Learning***

Some of the study participants obtained successful experiences in past years in school and they always expected something interesting. They became more active after coming back to school. They enjoyed activities at school such as doing experiments, project work, voluntary work, student camps, out-of-classroom learning programmes and Form 3 inter-class competitions (i.e. Grandpriz). They enjoyed free time playing with classmates during Physical Education lessons and have discussions about schoolwork with classmates.

#### **4.7.2 Negative aspects identified by the study participants**

##### ***Learning and school life***

The study participants became moody and inattentive during the lesson when scolded by teachers. They would lose temper and have words with their peers when harassed by classmates. They complained about some teachers being very strict with school rules.

A couple of study participants complained about the school hours being very long and mumbled and grumbled that studying at school being like a robot; and going to school being a routine job. Most of them felt frustrated about schoolwork, tired and bored when coming to school and they found the present curriculum boring and difficult for them.

#### **4.7.3 General feedback on the case study school**

Theft, bullying and vandalism were not very serious in the school, only inexpensive items such as books were stolen. It was believed that schoolmates had developed a sense of security in the school and they also had a strong sense of belonging to their own classes as well as the case study school.

#### **4.7.4 Factors contributing to the change of students' and parents' attitude towards the case study school**

##### ***Incorrect facts unveiled***

Parents unveiled some incorrect facts about Star School, which had unduly brought upon a very bad image about the school. Through experiencing in the school for years, parents and students realized the wrong emphasis on the reputation of the school and some parents discovered the improvement of their children both in personality growth and academic achievement. Some students also reported that they procured positive experiences in their school life although they were low attainers in their primary schools.

##### ***Close peer relationship and student-teacher relationship***

Students developed close peer relationships and student-teacher relationship in the case study school in past years. Most of all, teachers were found caring, encouraging and diligent.

#### **4.7.5 Description of teacher-student relationship from the informants' perspectives**

Teachers meant 'friends' to the informants and they were like their friends and relatives. They found teachers caring and helpful and they did not have prejudice against students with low academic achievement. Teachers were their tutors who not only gave guidance to students in their schoolwork but also helped students grow more mature. They agreed that teachers' influence was great to them in their school life.

#### **4.7.6 Description of peer- relationship from the informants' perspectives**

Knowledge and friends were both important to the informants. In school, classmates were able to share happiness and unhappiness with their peers and they helped each other with schoolwork. Mutual emotional support was important to students at school because emotional support contributed to individual personality growth. It was believed that winning trust from friends was important.

#### **4.7.7 Pupil grouping policy as part of Invitational Education programme**

Most informants agreed with the mixed ability grouping and both positive aspects and negative aspects are identified and summarized below:

##### ***Positive aspects about mixed ability grouping***

Co-operation among classmates and a strong sense of belonging developed in the mixed ability groups. Classmates felt encouraged and much happier because their peers wouldn't laugh at those students with low ability. There should be good and bad students in each class. Students should learn collaboratively and good students should help weak students. If students with poor academic results could be helped, they would work much harder.

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### ***Negative aspects about mixed ability grouping***

Study participants lacked opportunities to make more new friends from other classes because students were allocated to the same classes each year. It was suggested that some bad or naughty students should not be retained in the same class every year; instead, they should be re-allocated to different classes each year. Students' attention was sometimes distracted because classmates had good relationship and they were very playful, bringing upon annoying noise. After school, they sometimes played too often with their classmates and returned home late and consequently they were complained by parents.

Positive and negative aspects about ability grouping are also identified from the study participants and summarized below:

### ***Positive aspects about ability grouping***

In ability grouping, good students would not be affected by low attainers or misbehaving students in learning. Competitions often arose in class; therefore, students would work harder to keep pace with others. Students would benefit most when students with good academic achievement were allocated to the best class according to their academic performance.

### ***Negative aspect about ability grouping***

In ability grouping, classes with ALAs would be despised because of labeling effect. Studying in a class with all low ability students would evoke bad emotions among them and the labeling effect would undermine students' self-esteem. In fact, students with poor academic results should be helped by those with better academic results. In ability grouping, there was a keen competition in elite classes and students would suffer great pressure.

#### **4.7.8 Factors facilitating study participants to learn in the case study school**

##### ***Maintaining interest and making learning relevant***

Teachers taught something simple and easy and provided activities in class and outdoor activities, for example, training camp, educational TV programmes, documentary films, learning English at McDonald's, etc. Girls' interest was also considered, for example, providing cookery lessons for girls. Competitive games in class to enhance active learning were conducted. The school also provided career-related training for students, for example, computer design.

##### ***Promoting sense of competence***

Helping students procure a sense of competence in particular subjects, for example, Mathematics and English was vitally important. It was also beneficial to students when they were made aware of the importance of qualifications for their future careers. As a strategy, introducing something challenging to students could effectively train up their ability of thinking and analysis.

Students' achievement in non-academic performance, for example, sports, should also be appreciated and recognized because the recognition of good performance in this aspect could also evoke a sense of success, for example, winning competitors in computer games.

##### ***Teachers' effort and care***

It was beneficial to students if teachers could teach them slowly and adapt their teaching methods to cater for the needs of students. Teacher's encouragement, guidance and patience were conducive to student learning, in particular, their maintaining high expectation on them would enhance students' self-esteem. It was also agreed that teachers' diligence and effort were important to students, for example, teachers gave them tutorial lessons to help them prepare for examinations. Teachers with harmonious nature were also popular to students.

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### ***Promoting positive learning environment and social relationships***

According to informants, a sense of belonging was important – “if you like the school, you will go to school”. The classes were harmonious because classmates would not have prejudice against each other. Teamwork was obvious in the school because close relationship had yielded team spirit. Close peer-relationship also elicited group dynamics; they thus set the common goal —promoting to Form 4 together. Classmates were quite supportive and they formed study groups or joined tutorial classes, preparing themselves well for exams and striving for the common goal to their best. They had a strong desire to maintain close relationship in coming years even after graduation from school; thus they were keen to study together in the same class.

#### ***Student attention***

Attention span of ALAs was usually short; therefore students appreciated those teachers who could give more free time to them in class and keep school time as short as possible.

#### **4.7.9 What informants thought were important and valuable they had learnt in past years**

##### ***Critical thinking and social skills***

Study participants became more critical and self-cultivated through reading activities. They improved social skills through communicating with classmates and they learnt the life skills that could not be learnt in text-books. Some of them also developed emotion management skills, which were very important to their future careers

##### ***Positive attitude and value***

They learnt from teachers and developed positive attitude and value, which they thought was important to develop the principles for their conduct and decision-making. They also learned how to be good people and what was right and what was wrong from their teachers.

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### ***Positive behaviour and personality growth***

They learnt to behave much better than the past. Furthermore, they developed personal characters, in particular, more considerate to others, more patient to do things, more respectable to people, more sympathetic to people and they tended to understand and help people more often.

### ***Realization of personal strength***

They discovered strengths or talents in sports through participating in extra-curricular activities and sports. For example, they learnt to be more open in front of strangers; master information technology skills when searching relevant information on the Internet and design questionnaires and interview questions in the project work.

## **4.8 Chapter closing remark**

This chapter has analyzed the study participants' school life events, their feelings about them, their perceptions of the school operation, reaction to learning activities, both formal and experiential, difficulties encountered in learning, attitudes towards school, relationships in school and self-concept of ability and effort. Most importantly, the analysis has identified the factors contributing to the students' and parents' change of attitude towards the case study school; the factors facilitating study participants to learn and what informants thought were important and valuable they had learnt in past years. In the following chapter, the analysis will focus on the teachers' perspectives on their students, their experiences, the school operation and its recognition gained from the community and a couple of educational bodies with a view to triangulating the data collected from the study participants' interviews and field work.



## Chapter 5

### **Data Analysis: Perspectives from teachers, the community and educational bodies**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter has analyzed study participants' perspectives on their school experiences and school life in the context of IE and this chapter analyzes teachers' perspectives on the study participants and their aims, beliefs and strategies in connection with IE; and the chapter also examines the perspectives from the school management, the stake holders — parents and the community — and educational bodies on the teachers' work devoted to nurturing the Form 3 cohort and how the study participants might have been influenced by them.

The data to be analyzed was mainly collected through teacher questionnaires, document review, classroom teaching observations, participant observations, informants' interview data and an interview with Vice-Principal of Star school. As the word count of the thesis does not permit, only part of the relevant data collected through field work are quoted in the text of the thesis for triangulation wherever necessary whereas the detailed reports of the field work are included in this thesis as appendices.

#### **5.1 Teacher's beliefs and expectations—An analysis of questionnaire data for the Form 3 class-masters**

All class-masters of Form 3 cohort (i.e. ten) were invited to complete a questionnaire during my research period, which was intended to explore their beliefs, expectations, strategies, work in connection with IE and feelings about the Form 3 cohort. (*Refer to Appendix 10 for the sample questionnaire*).

As disclosed in the teacher questionnaires, the class-masters of the Form 3 cohort expected to cultivate their students to be responsible youths and develop positive attitude towards people and life, which they considered more important than instilling them with knowledge from the textbooks. To cater for the special needs of the cohort, they formed a quality circle (*Refer to Sections 5.6 to 5.9 of this chapter for Quality*

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*Circle and the work of the class-master*) and worked closely together and employed various types of strategies which were intended to create a positive learning environment and caring culture in the school. Some teachers' written responses in the questionnaire, which describe their beliefs and expectations on students, are extracted and presented below:

*"I try to have a good relationship with the students by communicating with them frequently." (a male class-master)*

*"This is my belief that I have to cultivate students into responsible youths even though their academic results are not too good, only if they are very serious about life and have good attitude towards people. This is important for their whole life. It is more important than teaching them textbook knowledge." (a female class-master)*

*"I encourage them to do their best and not to give up. I try to foster a sense of responsibility among them." (a male class-master)*

*"I expect them to become a responsible citizen of the society in the future. No matter how difficult the problems may be, I encourage them to face problems positively and never give up." (a male class-master)*

*"We think that optimism is very important when we teach our students. We believe that they have different talents and potentials that have not been explored and developed. With this belief, we try our best to facilitate the exploration and development through providing students with positive encouragement and enjoyable learning experience. As a result, they become more willing to learn." (a female class-master)*

*"I expect not only their academic performance but also their conduct is good." (a female class-master)*

*"As my class is supposed to be the best class in Form 3, high expectations are set on them, especially academic performance and attitude towards life and learning." (a female class-master)*

*"We expect our students to try their best in learning although they are ALAs. We*

*emphasize the process, instead of their academic results. Besides, we expect them to have proper behaviour such as self-respect, respect to others and consideration for others, which are essential in any contexts of their lives. We expect them to be positive and enthusiastic towards life, that is, never give up even when they encounter challenges and difficulties.” (a male class-master)*

*“At the beginning, I ‘force’ them to obey rules and orders. After a few months of ‘manipulations’, I try to explain to them the true meanings behind my practices and they show their willingness to co-operate and a good teacher student relationship has developed.” (a male class-master)*

It was found that although the teachers’ work was laborious and difficult, they felt relieved and satisfied when their students had developed a more mature and positive attitude towards their life. As discussed in Chapter 4, the informants felt cared and supported, obtained close social relationships and procured general satisfaction in school life and learning. (Refer to the related discussions presented in Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.0 - 4.3.3.). All this source of evidence can reflect that the teachers’ objectives had been achieved.

## **5.2 Strategies employed to create a positive learning environment and caring culture—An analysis of questionnaire data for the Form 3 class-masters**

Through the analysis of the teacher questionnaires, teachers’ strategies that were employed to create a positive learning environment and caring culture were identified and are depicted below:

1. establishing a class identity and creating group dynamics by organizing inter-class competitions e.g. Bullet Board Design Competition
2. encouraging self-discipline by setting class rules and allocating class duties among students, for example, school prefects, class monitor, etc.

3. developing a good teacher-student relationship and mutual trust and enhancing communication between teachers and students by asking students to write journals to teachers
4. facilitating students to create successful experiences in school and develop different potentials through extra-curricular activities, for example, organizing Christmas party
5. creating a good learning atmosphere and developing a good learning attitude and effective study skills by doing projects
6. facilitating students to form small study groups so that students would have more chance to discuss schoolwork and help each other.
7. enhancing mutual understanding between teachers and parents and understanding students' needs and problems by contacting students' parents by phone calls

These findings can provide relevant evidence for triangulation with the study participants' data. As reflected by the study participants in the interview data and observation data, these strategies had produced positive effects on students, in particular, they could acquire close social relationships, mutual support from their peers and teachers, a sense of belonging; most of all, they could obtain general satisfaction in their school life.

### **5.3 How study participants reacted to teachers' care and expectation—An analysis of in-depth interviews with students**

The informants' in-depth interview data provides evidence about their teachers' expectation on them, which mostly coincides what the teachers have stated in the above questionnaire for the Form 3 cohort. According to the informants in the in-depth interviews, expectations of their teachers were quite explicit and simple. The teachers just expected them to study hard and behave themselves in class. Informants usually reacted positively to their teachers' care and expectation, for example, they set a goal to strive for promoting to Form 4. There are some examples that can illustrate how study participants reacted to teachers' care and expectation:

With his teachers' encouragement, Chun-kit had been more attentive in class: *"Study harder in school... Don't sleep in class... [Teacher advises him] Yes, I seldom sleep in class now."*

Ki-yuen's teachers were satisfied with her academic performance. On the other hand, her teacher expected her to participate in the extra-curricular activities more actively: *"... my teacher told me to design the bulletin board for the class. I didn't think I could draw well. She told me that I could draw beautiful pictures, so I took up the task of designing the board."* Through the activities, Ki-yuen discovered her potentials—she could draw well. Since then, she became more enthusiastic in joining voluntary services.

Fai-shing appreciated his teacher's guidance, encouragement and patience: *"... my English teacher insisted that I should work on dictations [English] until I can do them well."* Despite being detained after school for tutorial classes, he did not regard his teacher's 'punishment' as a form of pressure for him. As a matter of fact, he thought his 'being detained' after school had helped him learn as he said, *"I think I was often kept to stay after school by teachers and I spent more time doing revisions so I could concentrate on my studies better..."*.

Kei-hoi was sometimes detained after school by his English teacher too, doing dictation practice; however, he did not think that this was a sort of punishment, either:

*"English dictations, I failed, then I had to be detained after school, I made several attempts but I couldn't do well, so Miss La [name of English teacher, a pseudonym] taught me how to revise it...No [this is not a punishment]. I feel she is helping me boost my academic results."*

Yin-ho was another informant who did not regard "punishment" as a negative thing to him; instead, he could learn a lesson from the teacher's "punishment":

*"Em...em...when we forget to bring books or homework, the teachers punish us by copying lines...then we will take back the books or the things in the future...It makes us remember to bring back things to school on particular days...No problem, if I have done something wrong, I should be punished."*

Ni-yi said that her teachers were very diligent and made their effort to teach them.

She also pointed out that she really felt cared and encouraged in school:

*"The teachers care about us very much. Sometimes we lose temper but they can understand and pacify us. When we did something wrong, they would point it out but when we were sad, they would come and comfort us."*

Because of his teacher's careful guidance and teaching, Wah-ka developed confidence in learning Mathematics as he said, *"In the past, when I was in primary school, I didn't like it. Now, the teacher can give attention to individual students, so we can follow the lessons."* He made improvement because of his teacher's encouragement and he liked to hear his teachers saying this: *"Improved, good. Keep it up."*

Ho-kwun once failed an English examination. With his teacher's encouragement, he could pass it finally:

*"When I was in Form 1...about English exam, I failed, Miss La [name of English teacher, a pseudonym] asked me to study harder next time...I passed it finally."*

Yin-ho was too slow to learn but his teachers were patient to teach him because: *"...they can adapt the methods to help me...They teach us once again very slowly."*

Besides teachers' care and encouragement, according to the informants, teacher style and their teaching methods affected their learning. The following are some good examples illustrating this point.

Ni-yi really appreciated her teacher's effort in teaching them as well as the interesting activities through which she could learn English more effectively:

*"Sometimes the English teacher took us out of the classroom to learn, for example, once she took us to learn English at McDonald's. We can learn English and we can play at the same time. Another time we were taken to the public park, where we could play and learn at the same time. We were very happy. My English teacher used very lively teaching methods."*

Ki-yuen also agreed that teachers with a humorous nature might promote learning in class as she said, *"....sometimes teachers talk with us and tell us jokes so*

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*that we find it much easier to remember what we have learnt.”*

Study participants' expectations on their teachers and school were also fully discussed in Section 4.5 and the analysis reflected they could feel cared, supported and encouraged as well as obtaining general satisfaction in their school life.

#### **5.4 Teacher-student relationship—An analysis of participant observation data**

As noted in the previous chapter, all informants claimed that the teacher-student relationship was great. At the same time, the teacher questionnaire data reveals that obtaining close teacher-student relationship was also one of their goals. A field visit to the research site also provided me with a triangulated evidence for this great relationship. The visit was made on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2005. On that morning, in the school, two Christmas Fathers visited the five classes of the Form 3 students. They entered each class and celebrated Christmas with them by singing Christmas songs, playing games and delivering Christmas presents to them. They really had very wonderful time with the students. In fact, the two Christmas Fathers were disguised by two of the Form 3 class-masters.

Visiting the cohort on that day, I not only witnessed the appearance of the Christmas Fathers but was also impressed by the harmonious atmosphere and close teacher-student relationships in the school. Such an early field visit afforded me with a guidepost for exploring the research site in the future. (*Refer to Appendix 11 for the participation observation report*).

#### **5.5 How teachers felt after teaching the cohort of students for three years—An analysis of teacher questionnaire data**

Most of the class-masters had been the mentor teachers for the Form 3 cohort for three years since the implementation of IE in Star school in 2003-2004. According to the teacher questionnaire, most of them felt satisfied about their work devoted to the Form 3 cohort. From the students' perspectives, they could also achieve general satisfaction in their school life and learning. Apparently, both teachers and students were satisfied with what they had given and gained respectively in Star School. To illustrate the claim, some written responses from the teacher questionnaires about the class-masters' feelings on their jobs in previous years are shown below:

*"I feel relieved and satisfied when I found my students more mature and positive towards their life. To me, I am sure I gain more than loss. I get more friendship and satisfaction from my students." (a female class-master)*

*"Although I have taught in this school for only two years, I developed a very deep teacher-student relationship. I feel very happy and satisfied. I found gain more than loss. Seeing the students' progress, I felt very satisfied." (a female class-master)*

*"I appreciate students' great improvement in both their academic and discipline performance. I have learnt how to communicate with teenagers." (a female class-master)*

*"A strong teacher-student relationship is developed. Students are willing to talk with teachers." (a male teacher)*

*"I feel delighted to teach them. I have learnt that I should have realistic expectation with optimism on my students. Although sometimes I am disappointed by their misbehaviors, I am still glad to have these lovely students." (a male teacher)*

## **5.6 Experiencing how Form 3 class-masters work**

During the period of my appointment as Supply Teacher in Star School from October, 2005 to June, 2006, I was designated as the assistant class-master of Class A of the Form 3 cohort and I was required to take up the same jobs as performed by other class-masters.



As a class-master of Form 3 cohort, I had to attend the additional class-master period for 17 days. "Additional Class-master Period" was another inviting strategy of Star School. Such an additional class-master period was arranged at the end of the school day, that is, in the ninth period of the school day. The purpose of this period was to facilitate class-masters to take good care of their own classes, for example, helping students with their schoolwork, checking their schoolwork, organizing class-based activities, discussing and solving problems regarding their classes, etc.

I performed the assigned duties for 17 days in Class A, each lasting 40 minutes. In the class-master periods, teachers were usually very busy. I was assigned to check students' handbooks to ensure that they had noted down the homework for that particular day and their parents had signed relevant school documents. My colleague made announcements about school affair and activities. Sometimes we checked if they had finished their homework. At other times, they were supposed to do their revisions and do homework assigned on that day on their own. Some were doing homework and some were doing their own reading. However, some were talking and some were sleeping, waiting for the school bell. Students-on-duty were cleaning the blackboard. Some students asked my colleague questions on their homework. Very often the class was noisy.

I also paid short visits to other classes of the Form 3 cohort during the class-master periods. In this period, students were supposed to do their revisions and do homework assigned on that day. However, I observed that not many students were doing homework. Some were talking and some were sleeping.

As an assistant class-master, after a whole day, I had to attend this additional class-master period and I really felt exhausted myself. My involvement in this school event could really provide myself with real-life experience about the commitment of the teachers to their students. However, according to my observations, I did not find that all students could make good use of this class-master period. Above all, as an additional session at the end of the day, I really felt that it was too tiring both for teachers and students. Regarding the study participants' responses to such a policy, the analysis of the in-depth interviews reveals that some of the informants, for example, Ni-yi, Chiu-kwok, Kuen-siu and Ping-kwai complained that the school day was too long, especially, they felt very tired during the additional class-master period at the end of the school day and they did not think such a school policy was useful to them

although they understood that such a school policy aimed to facilitate them to improve their school results. In fact, the informants expected more free time after school and shorter school hours.

The above characteristics of low attainers had already been identified and fully discussed in the previous chapter. Apparently, although this strategy in connection with “Additional Class-master Period” was well-intended, the Quality Circle should adjust their strategies, considering the needs of the low attainers.

### **5.7 Experiencing teachers’ difficulty through formal classroom observation—An analysis of participant observation data**

According to the informants, English and Mathematics were the subjects that most of them found difficult to learn. To understand more about the work of the teachers and how students learnt in the classrooms, I expected some classroom observations. During the field work in Star School, I was granted approval from the school to observe 4 formal classroom teachings, including 3 English lessons and 1 Mathematic lesson. All of them pertained to the cohort of Form 3 classes (*Refer Appendix 11 for classroom teaching observation reports*).

One of the classes was quite noisy despite my presence in the class. The teacher had to stop them several times but it seemed ineffective. She repeated things quite often and taught quite slowly. In the English classes, the students were found rather weak in English, especially listening skills. All the materials were tailor-made by the English teachers themselves to cater for their standards. In an English remedial group, the teacher had to explain to the students in Chinese most of the time and devote a lot of time supervising those students who were off-task. In a couple of classes, one or two students were found fallen asleep. In another English class, the teacher was doing a grammar revision for the class. The students had a question-and-answer game, in which if students could answer the teacher’s questions in English, then they would gain a score. Most students were quite keen to raise hands and answer the teachers’ questions. This lesson was found the most impressive among the classroom teaching observations. Overall, the classes I observed were not very disruptive except for some inattentive behaviours, for example, talking to neighbours quietly and fidgeting.

Moreover, regarding the observations in the after-school tutorial classes, teachers just taught a small group of students who had problems with their schoolwork. On a

couple of occasions, students were actually told to stay after school to do the homework once again because they failed to submit their homework in time, for example, extra practice with English dictations. According to the in-depth interviews, a couple of informants did not regard the '*detention*' of this type as punishment; instead, they really understood that teachers made every endeavour to help them.

Teachers had also recognized boredom and lack of success in classroom learning as the main reasons for student disruptive behaviours in school; therefore, they had to sustain students' interest in learning by trimming and restructuring the curriculum and seek ways to make their teaching as more engaging, exciting and successful as possible. On the other hand, they struggled to maintain a quiet learning environment in class and handle students' disruptive behaviours while they were teaching. Moreover, in addition to normal classroom teaching, as mentor teachers, they were often required to provide counseling for students with emotional or misbehavioural problems and supervise their progress in school work. The teachers' effort had really contributed to quality education.

This source of data has provided triangulated evidence about learning difficulties of the study participants and teachers' difficulty as well as their contribution to the Form 3 cohort. Apparently, teacher contribution had been recognized by the students and parents based on the analysis of student data.

## **5.8 Teacher's Quality Circle—An analysis of document review**

IE is most likely to thrive in an atmosphere of trust and it involves many co-operative, collaborative activities (Novak, 2002). Adopting the rationales of IE, the first Quality Circle, comprising 2 class-masters in each class of Form 1 in 2003-2004 (altogether ten), started to operate with the view to enhancing teachers' relationship and co-operation. The analysis is principally based on the review of the following two school documents: Action Plan of Invitational Education of Star School, 2003-2004 and Portfolio of Invitational Education Programmes of Star School, 2006.

The Quality Circle of the Form 3 cohort, which consisted of 10 Form 3 class-masters, had been operated as a core inviting strategy since the implementation of IE in Star School in 2003-2004. The ultimate goal of the Quality Circle, was to

secure maximum care for the needs of the students of the Form 3 cohort and procure effective communication among the 10 class-masters of the same cohort. Collaborating with student guidance teachers and discipline teachers, the class-masters should integrate guidance programmes for all students with a positive focus on counseling approaches. Most importantly, the Quality Circle was authorized to work on tentative policies independently, which would be evaluated and reported to the school management at the end of the school term (2003-2004). Tentative policies implemented by such an action group were subsequently improved and adopted in the school in the following school year. Moreover, to procure ample cooperation of all class-masters, regular meetings were convened to discuss the problems and planning for the Form 3 cohort.

The following school events and strategies were specially planned for Form 3 cohort in line with IE, and executed by the Quality Circle during 2005-2006 academic year. The responses of the study participants or effects of the events on them were quite positive and had been discussed at great length in Chapter 4 and detailed observation reports were put in Appendix 11. According to the analysis of Chapter 4, the study participants reacted to the events quite positively.

***Inviting strategies or programmes implemented by Quality Circle of Form 3 cohort***

1. Multiple Intelligence Challenge Training Camp and Student Camp for Class D
2. Volunteers Training and Voluntary charitable services
3. Form 3 Inter-class Competitions—"Grandpriz"
4. Fashion Show
5. Project Learning
  - The Project Day for the Cohort—"Careers and Further Studies"
  - Life-wide Learning Activities in English Language—A Visit to Science Museum, Hong Kong
6. Heterogeneous pupils' grouping
7. Class identity enhancement
8. Celebration Days
9. Class-master Period
10. After-school tutorial groups
11. Additional Class-master Period at the end of the school day

## 5.9 Invitational Education: Changes, recognition and challenge

The analysis of this section involves in-depth interviews, an interview with Vice-principal of Star School, document review, in particular, Portfolio of Invitational Education Programme of Star School, 2004-2006, Action Plan of Invitational Education of Star School, 2003-2006 and Site Reports on Star School, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 submitted by the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE), an official letter of an educational body and information available from the website of Star School (<http://www.csbs.edu.hk>).

In the in-depth interviews, the informants reflected that Star School projected a very negative image in the community in the past as their friends, relatives and even primary school teachers generally believed that students in there were academically low and there were a lot of bullies, fighting among students and even theft and they consequently felt frustrated and worried before admitted to Star school. However, they changed their attitude towards the school and they claimed they could enjoy a satisfactory school life after studying in there for a couple of years.

In February, 2006, that is, twenty-eight months after its implementation of IE, the Principal of Star School, Mr Nam ( *a pseudonym*) wrote to the International Alliance for Invitational Education, claiming its eligibility for the “Inviting School Award, 2005-2006”. In his review of acceptance verification statement, Mr Nam claimed that since the implementation of Invitation Education in his school in 2003, much progress had been evident in the recent two years. Student discipline problems had diminished; parent involvement had enhanced; policies had been successfully implemented to help increase student achievement; most of all, the enthusiasm of his teaching staff had been vigorously activated and the quality of teaching had been acquired.

After supervisions and assessments, the IAIE officially announced that Star School won the “Inviting School Award for the year 2006”. Mrs Fanny Law (*former Permanent Secretary for Hong Kong Education of Manpower and Bureau before 2007*) and the renowned scholar from the United States, Mr Williams Watson Purkey, collaboratively presented the Inviting School Awards to Hong Kong school winners in Hong Kong in October, 2006. Star School finally procured the award after three years’ concerted effort in the implementation of IE. In fact, Star School had encountered three consecutive years’ assessments (*i.e. 2003-2004, 2004-2005 and 2006-2007*) by the IAIE before gaining its eligibility for the award.

The first assessment was conducted in March, 2004, the first year of implementation of IE, when the consultant, Dr Kate Asbill, from the IAIE paid a formal site visit to Star School with a view to examining the school operation in line with IE. She met with a multitude of people representing the various groups served by this school: students, the Principal and Vice-principals, certified and non-certified staff, parents, and student teachers. She also read relevant school reports and visited some of the classes. In her site-visit report on Star School, she wrote that the courtyard surrounding the school was filled with a variety of lovely flowers and greenery. An oasis-type atmosphere had been created. The appearance of the school and courtyard sent a message that said, “We are proud of our school.” During her stay in Star School, she really felt that Star School had a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The school staff were well-trained with inviting philosophy and parents played an active role in Invitation Education. The people she met seemed to take pride in what was going on in their building and wanted to be a part of it.

In April, 2005, the second year of implementation of IE, other consultants, Mr Paul Staker and Mrs Martha Staker from the IAIE, visited the school with the same purposes and administered a similar assessment as Dr Kate Asbill did previously. In their site-visit report on the school, they pointed out that the school had successfully created a warm caring atmosphere and had provided quality education with teacher’s concerted effort in accordance with inviting philosophy.

The final assessment on Star School, which was administered by a team of the IAIE scholars, was conducted in April, 2006 and the results of the Inviting School Award were not announced until the end of June, 2006. Now Star School is one of the Inviting School Awards winners in Hong Kong awarded by the IAIE.

A couple of years later, it was announced in the website of Star School that on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2008, Mr Ming (*a pseudonym*), Vice-principal of Star School, on behalf of the school was flown to Chicago, United States, in the company with a couple of staff of Hong Kong Education Bureau to receive “2008 Inviting School Fidelity Award” (*having a higher status than “Inviting School Award”*) to be presented by the IAIE, because of the school’s outstanding performance in the implementation of IE in past years.

In the hope of understanding the latest development about Star School, an interview was made with Mr Ming, on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2009. My concern laid on the changes of the school in recent years, in particular, the students’ performance in general, students’ academic performance and their the quality of school life. (*Refer to appendix 13 for the interview questions.*)

“*Recognition,*” said Mr Ming in his pride and joy when asked what changes about the school were found significant in my meeting with him. He admitted that students’ sense of achievement in public examinations (*i.e. Hong Kong Certificate Examination of Education (for Form 5 level) and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (for Form 7 level)*) was not evident as compared the other schools but students reflected their views of satisfactory quality of school life and successful sense of opportunity in the school. These facts have already been affirmed in the in-depth interviews, student questionnaires and participation observations and also fully presented in Chapter 4.

It is apparent that gaining recognition was the major change of the school in past years. Recognition had been originated from students, teachers, school staff, stake holders of the school — parents, the community and educational organizations. As a result, the school image in the community had gradually improved. Mr Ming claimed that the good behaviours of students and teacher effort and contribution were reflected in its brand name “School of Care and Love”.

As Star School believed that “parents — people” was one of the important 5 P’s

IE conception, parents were encouraged to participate in school policies through attending some teachers' meetings, managing the Parent-teacher Association, offering voluntary services for the school and helping teachers organize activities for students. In past years, some parents also witnessed the positive changes of their children both in moral and academic. Even the manageress of the school cafeteria, Ms Ng (*a pseudonym*) and the security guard of the school, Mr Sang (*a pseudonym*), both of whom had been working in Star School for more than eight years, also witnessed the improvement of student behaviour, for example, there was less disruptive behaviour such as fighting and swearing against each other with foul language during the recess. Mr Sang also pointed out the students offered help to keep the school premises clean in earnest than before and they showed respect to him, in spite of being a mere security guard. On the other hand, Mr Ming noted that teachers in there taught their students with all their hearts. Students, with the guidance of teachers, actively joined in the both academic and non-academic activities in the community; especially, the voluntary services of helping the poor in the community. Teachers' responses in the teacher questionnaires and informants' feedback have explicitly affirmed Mr Ming's claim. Beyond question, students were most committed to the community, which was reflected by their active participation in the voluntary services for the community. These findings were also discussed in the in-depth interview data, which indicate that most informants were concerned about the provision with structured learning experiences in the areas of moral, emotional and spiritual education rather than upgrading their knowledge and abilities, especially the knowledge from the textbooks or about examinations.

In February, 2009, Star School also obtained the Honorable Award in "School of Love and Care, 2008-2009" and the First Prize in "The Best Parent-school Co-operation School Award", which were organized by Hong Kong Christian Services Association in collaboration with Hong Kong Education Bureau.



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The organizing agents stated that Star School had attained outstanding performance in the following aspects: (*Refer to appendix 14 for more information of the event*).

1. attaining active co-operation and support from parents in school policies
2. disseminating the conception of IE among parents and successfully involving them in the implementation of IE in partnership
3. involving parents in offering help with the student exchange programme in the United States
4. providing learning opportunity for the students from South-east Asian (*in particular, Indian and Pakistan*) and newly arrived children from Mainland China and catering for the special needs of learning (*these types of children usually find it difficult to attain places in mainstream schools*)

Despite the recognitions gained from the stake holders of the school, the community and the educational bodies, according to Mr Ming, on the journey to IE, the school experienced conflicts among staff and encountered difficulties in its planning and implementation on the preliminary stage. It was really a great challenge to launch anything new in such a school, especially the application of new conception of IE.

As stated in the Action Plan of Invitational Education of Star School, the introduction of IE on the preliminary stage required an intentional effort with sufficient time for the teachers to understand many different parts and make sure how each part works progressively to procure positive changes. To achieve the goal, regular workshops were therefore held to raise the awareness of the school staff in the needs of change and enrich their understanding of the IE theories, concepts and applying them to real situations with a commitment to work together to recognize common goals of the school. All in all, great effort was put in facilitating the teachers to share common goals and work collaboratively. All these required teachers' arduous effort, patience, time and team spirit.

Being members of staff of Star School, teachers had experienced changes in their belief systems and methods of teaching. With traditional perspectives in discipline management, teachers tended to achieve external controls, restrict personal choice and limit freedom of students. With inviting philosophy, teachers aimed to nurture self-disciplined and responsible learners. Teachers no longer enforced authoritarian school rules; instead, they activated social relationship factors in school so that they could develop a sense of belonging and responsibility for their own behaviours. They should also recognize boredom and lack of success in classroom learning as the main reasons for student disruptive behaviours in school.

Last but not least, recognition had also been gained from school staff. The strategic application of Quality Circle formed by 10 enthusiastic teachers in 2003-2004 became an effective way to spread the innovation in connection with IE and gained the recognition of the whole school in a later stage of the development process. Good work had been procured as a result of the implementation of Invitation Education and the innovation was subsequently spread in other forms and classes by 'ripple effect' in the following years.

#### **5.10 Summary of major findings**

The analysis of this chapter has provided significant triangulation with the data collected from study participants' data and observation data. The chapter has analyzed teachers' perspectives on the study participants and relevant inviting strategies and at the same time, the analysis has managed to affirm the positive teacher-student relationship and identify the informants' reactions to teacher expectations and strategies and their reactions to those factors that had facilitated their learning. Above all, the analysis has affirmed the recognitions gained from school staff, parents, the community and educational bodies in what Star School had done in past years.

### **5.10.1 Informants' reactions to teacher expectations**

It was identified that student participants understood the teachers' care and encouragement. Because of teacher expectation, they were more attentive in class and more enthusiastic to participate in extra-curricular activities and voluntary services. They even made an attempt to discover and develop their own potentials. However, some of them reflected that they had no confidence to fulfill teachers' expectations.

### **5.10.2 Informants' reactions to the factors that facilitate learning**

Upon the analysis, it was found that the study participants were positively influenced by teachers and their strategies to facilitate them to learn. Because of teachers' encouragement, study participants were more willing to do things without teachers' instructions. They were more persevered with their learning, for example, doing English Dictations. They were more attentive and they asked questions more often in class, for example, during Mathematics lessons. They finished class work more quickly. Before exams and tests, they played computer games less often and did more revisions. They developed confidence in learning, for example, English and Mathematics and they were able to adjust learner strategies to achieve their goals. Students who were '*detained*' to study or complete their unfinished assignments after school by teachers did not treat this as '*a punishment*' but '*a sort of encouragement*'. Above all, they appreciated teachers' good intentions of helping them

### **5.10.3 Teacher contribution and recognitions gained**

In the classroom observations, I really felt the arduous tasks that the teachers were taking on to teach those ALAs. It is commonly known that ALAs are characterised by their weak foundation and low motivation to study. They lack study habits, tend to be passive and have a low-self image of themselves due to low academic attainment; most of all, they even cause disruptive behaviours in class. Through the analysis, it is obvious that study participants recognized teacher contribution to nurturing students.

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As a result of the teachers' concerted effort, the school's support and students' positive behaviours and active participation in the community activities, recognitions could be gained from school staff, parents, the community and educational bodies in what Star School had done in past years.

### **5.11 Chapter closing remark**

According to the analysis of data in connection with 'learning', informants preferred to learn something simple and easy and provide activities in class and outdoor activities. They found career-related training relevant for them and they were quite concerned about the school's provision with structured learning experiences in the areas of moral, emotional and spiritual education rather than upgrading their knowledge and abilities, especially the knowledge from the textbooks or about examinations. Therefore, it is very important to reform the school curriculum in the way that caters for the needs of the ALAs. The desk-bound seatwork activities and chalk-and-talk teaching cannot serve the purpose of helping the ALAs to learn. In short, schools should help students obtain a sense of competence in learning.

Based on the present analysis and the framework of motivation theories and inviting theories, the next two chapters are intended to discuss what the study case school has achieved in connection with the implementation of IE and the implication of its experience.

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## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussions**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter aims to identify and discuss the relationship between the study participants' personal school experiences in Star School and IE; describe how IE was implemented in the case study school and discuss how it might have influenced study participants' school experiences, particularly in these motivational dimensions: emotions, social relationships, attitude towards their school and learning, sense of belonging, personal aspirations and self-concept of ability and effort. The data collected through triangulated methods are mainly analyzed in accordance with IE theories as well as motivation theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and achievement motivation. The materials of the study being examined have bridged the gap between the literature of motivation and IE and substantiated the theories as the result of the investigation into the practice of IE in Star School as a case study.

#### **6.1 Findings derived from informants' stories of school life events**

One of the aims of the study as stated in Chapter 1 is to investigate the study participants' school experiences in the case study school where IE was being implemented. To achieve this aim, the approach to the analysis of data is mainly exploratory and descriptive. First and foremost, the informants' stories in Star School gave personal accounts of the development and importance of their positive social relationships and the development of a sense of belonging and security in the school. They also described their learning problems, complaints, teachers' expectations on them and their expectations on their school, personal aspirations, their parents' and their own change of attitude towards Star School, their belief in success and failure and self-perception of ability and effort. The findings of the study reflect that most informants could attain general satisfaction in their school life and learning experiences in past years and they thought that the learning materials and the school curriculum could cater for their needs. Most importantly, positive emotions that had yielded from satisfactory school life and developed among schoolmates as well as teachers acted as a motivator for learning. As a result, they strove for their common goal—promotion to Form 4. On the other hand, teachers' contribution to the quality of

education and their effort put in nurturing their students were affirmed by the informants in the in-depth interviews and triangulated through participant observations, which can provide complimentary information about the implementation of IE in the case study school.

#### **6.1.1 Development of positive social relationships**

According to Action Plan of Invitational Education of Star School (2003-2006), the school believed that when students took a keen interest to come to school and stay at school for learning activities and extra-curricular activities after school, they would be more enthusiastic to learn in class and teachers would be in a better position to teach and nurture them. Therefore, all the inviting strategies of Star School would serve to facilitate students to develop positive emotions and positive attitude towards the school and love going to school as the very top priority of the school strategies. Most important of all was to facilitate them to learn, live and grow at school subsequently.

On analyzing both the interview data and questionnaire data, it was apparent that most of the study participants found their learning environment caring and supportive. Some of the informants found the staff in the school very friendly and they appreciated the open spaces and greenish environment of the school. Furthermore, informants found it enjoyable and comfortable to come and study in school and they stressed the importance of social relationships in school. All in all, most of them pointed out that positive emotional state was important to their learning.

Regarding social relationships, Raffini (1996) states that all humans are social beings with a basic desire to belong to a group. The desire for relatedness is a basic psychological need for students. In Star School, students developed not only close peer relationship but also positive teacher-student relationship. They also developed a strong sense of belonging and their attitude towards school changed much more positive after learning and growing in the School for a couple of years. According to Lumsden (1999), students will be confident about themselves and they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and actively engaged in learning activities when they find themselves connected rather than detached from their peers, parents and teachers. At

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the same time, teachers can enhance student motivation at school by emphasizing cooperation among students rather than competition and helping students who are less socially skilled.

### **6.1.2 Acquisition of a sense of belonging and a sense of security in school**

Some informants' parents were worried about the students' misbehaviours, fighting and bullying in Star School; therefore most of them were quite concerned about the children's safety in the school in the very beginning and the informants felt very frustrated about their placement in Star School as well. However, according to the evidence collected from the informants, it was manifest that the study participants could perceive a strong sense of security in Star School in past years since there were not many informants who reported theft, vandalism or even bullying in their own experiences. Only minor cases were reported, such as losing mobile phones, books and a small amount of money. Above all, reports on bullying were rare. Beyond question, most of them still felt secure at school. At the same time, informants developed a strong sense of belonging to the school, which could be reflected from their positive peer-relationships, teacher-student relationships and strong class identity.

Provision of a caring, harmonious learning environment for students and development of a sense of belonging and a sense of security is amount to fulfilling a student's basic physiological needs (Maslow, 1954) and every school should make endeavour to achieve this. A caring school is the one where students feel secure, respected, cared, supported and encouraged (Purkery and Novak, 1996). In Star School, most of the informants (Form 3 cohort) felt secure, encouraged, cared and interested in participating in the learning activities, both academic and experiential. These components might provide further evidence in explaining why they loved going to school.

### **6.1.3 Emergence of evident changes of attitude towards Star School**

Another source of evidence that exhibits informants' positive feelings about Star School is the change of the informants' attitude and their parents' attitude towards the school. For a number of years, Star School had been intaking a large number of Secondary 1 students whose parents put Star School in the very low priority of their secondary school place allocation forms and even some of them did not include it in

their list. Undoubtedly, most of the students were very upset or felt helpless when they knew they were allocated to Star School in the very beginning.

According to the informants, their parents selected secondary schools for them based on rather pragmatic considerations, for example, the students' academic achievement, the prestige of Star school and the conducts of the students of the school. Apparently, they had already obtained a notorious impression of Star School before they made their choices. Most of the parents and the informants' primary school teachers thought that Star School was filled with ALAs who would often cause disruptive problems in class. The parents were quite perplexed about the unconfirmed information about Star School and their negative attitude towards Star School subsequently affected their children who had thus developed rather negative feelings about the new school before they started their school life there. In short, as the informants' data reflected, they had a very low self-image for being students of Star School at the beginning of the school term.

However, having learnt and grown in the case study school for two or three years, all the informants understood a lot about their schoolmates, teachers and the school; they developed very close peer-relationship, teacher-student relationship and they acquired positive school experiences and a sense of belonging and security in the school. All these factors resulted in a great change in their attitude towards the school and some of the parents also changed their attitude towards the school because they witnessed the positive changes of their children, both in their personality development and achievement performance in Star School in past years. Noticeably, the prestige and image of Star School had already become different to them. Regarding the prestige and image of Star School, there were some significant informants' feedbacks. For example, Fung-wang argued that he did not find Star School so bad and negative as his primary school teachers described to him or there were not too many badly-behaving students in the school in fact. On the other hand, Yan-ka did not regret to have studied in this school for three years because she had developed her potentials in the school. All this source of data can support a claim that students' and their parents' positive attitude towards Star School helped dispel the bad image of the school.



#### **6.1.4 Development of positive emotions as motivator for learning**

The analysis shows that most of the informants referred 'friendship' to their "relationships with their classmates and teachers". Their descriptions of the relationships with their 'friends' were very substantial as well as sentimental; in other words, the relationships reflected their mutual understanding, love and care. They found their classmates, especially their teachers very valuable in their school life because their teachers were caring and they treated their students as friends and children. All these things make it clear that positive social relationship in school is important to students. According to Performance Indicators for Hong Kong Schools (Education Department, 2002), students' strong sense of belonging, the parents' and students' positive attitude towards the school and heart-warming social relationships in school can reflect the satisfactory school climate and culture. Moreover, Lam (1994) points out that positive teacher-student relationship can not only facilitate the development of students' personality growth but also enhance students' eagerness to learn in school.

In addition to obtaining very close social relationship in school, positive attitude towards the school and a strong sense of belonging and security, most informants claimed that they could attain general satisfaction in their school life in Star School as they experienced success, other than academic success, in some school events such as project learning activities, voluntary services and student training camp and their emotions were quite positive in the school most of the time. In truth, it is the intention of Star School to create positive emotions for its students, in particular, successful learning experiences, a sense of belonging, harmonious relationships and supportive school climate. Regarding positive emotions, Fredrickson (1998) claims that there is empirical and clinical support for the importance of positive emotions on learning because positive emotions, namely, joy, interest, contentment, and love can enhance an attentional scope. Obviously, Star School could achieve the goals and the caring and supportive learning environment that had been created would facilitate learning as a result. When an atmosphere or a learning environment that nurtures student motivation to learn has been elicited and cultivated through the whole school, students are most likely to procure a strong motivation to acquire new knowledge (Ames 1986, Brophy 1987, Grossnickle 1989, Wlodkowski and Jayness, 1990).

This analysis also reveals that the close friendship among students created positive emotions in them, which consequently elicited a volitional force for progress in learning among the cohort of Form 3. The following examples will suffice to affirm the claim. Ying-ka and Ping-kwai formed a study group to achieve their common goal—to study together and wish to be promoted to Form 4 in the following academic year. Likewise, Chiu-kyok noted that a strong sense of belonging and positive team collaboration among his classmates elicited a strong desire to win the Inter-class Bulletin Board Design Competition (2004-2005) for their own class. It was apparent that due to the mutual support and close relationship among students, the informants energized their internal volitional forces to move from their plans towards their goals. To support this claim, Borich & Tombari (1997) say that motivation elicits a force that makes people do something and it involves forces or energy, aim or purpose. Under the effect of this move, people can sustain goal-directed actions. Similarly, Corno (1993) states that volition can be characterized as a psychological control dynamic that makes a person concentrate on his goals despite difficulties and therefore volitional force contributes to attain task completion. The above informants' cases produce evidence to illustrate the effect of such a motivational force which was most likely the product of positive social relationship in the school.

It was manifest that some of the informants had a common plan—promoting to Form 4 by studying harder to pass the final examination. In the hope of examining if the informants had really made progress in the final examinations (Form 3, 2005-2006), their examination results were investigated. Comparing the informants' examination results in Term 1 and Term 2 (Form 3, 2005-2006), it was discovered that Ying-ka, Ping-kwai and Fung-kin made a tremendous progress in their academic results in Term 2 as compared with those in Term 1. However, this small-scale investigation only serves to provide cross-reference for investigating some of the informants' progress but it does not offer evidence to make any significant claims. The following table shows salient progress of some informants in Term 2 examination.

**Figure 6.1**

Table showing the progress of some informants in Term 2 Examination (Form 3, 2005-2006)

Name of Informants	Sex	Position in Term 1 *n=147	Position in Term 2 n=147	Improvement in Form position
<i>Ping-kwai</i>	<i>F</i>	86	53	+33
<i>Ying-ka</i>	<i>F</i>	122	96	+26
<i>Fung-kin</i>	<i>M</i>	99	75	+24
Wah-ka	M	25	16	+9
Yin-ho	M	147	140	+7
Ching-ching	F	83	77	+6
Chiu-kwok	M	140	134	+6
Ki-yuen	F	9	3	+6

\*n (number of study participants in the Cohort of Form 3) = 147

Not only did mutual support trigger a strive for academic progress but also emotional support contributed to informants' growth in the school. In the analysis, some of the following cases would elucidate the claim. Ying-ka thought friends were important to her. When she sometimes quarreled with her parents, she would share her sadness with her classmates in school and often receive support from her classmates. Similarly, Shing-siu found that he became much braver to speak in front of the class because he felt supported in his class. Discussing the influence of human relationship, Howe (2002) puts it this way: "Human intimacy is a complex combination of passion, commitment, friendship, and love in which two individual experience of a compelling desire for ongoing close interaction with each other." (p. 15). Therefore, close relationships can provide mutual support, mutual fulfillment, and promote positive growth and development. Most importantly, they support work, leisure and learning.

#### **6.1.5 Informants' self-perception of ability and effort and causal attribution**

"Learning" is the over-arching issue to be dealt with in this study. Through in-depth interviews and participant observations, I strove to explore not only the ALAs' learning experiences, but also their self-perceptions of ability and effort and causal attribution, particularly in their successful experiences or frustrations in

learning. All in all, the data can be analyzed for examining the influences on student motivation under the ecosystem of Star School which had been implementing IE.

Most informants admitted that they could not attain satisfactory academic achievement in Star School or their ability of learning was rather poor; however, they apparently carried much conviction that diligence was more important than their ability of learning or intelligence. Moreover, when asked the reasons in the in-depth interviews why they could not do their school work well, most of them explained that they had not made the effort to study and some even said if they had worked harder, they would have performed much better in examinations. Elliott, Hufton, Willis & Illushin (2005) also find it true that if students perceive the effort they put into the tasks is the key factor for their success, they are more enthusiastic to work to their full capacity. To elucidate this point, some examples are quoted below for supporting evidence.

Kuen-siu thought his poor performance in academic was due to his laziness. He did not think luck was important in his academic success. Shing-siu said he was quick at learning but he was too arrogant and he just did revisions before exams. He did not work hard because he pointed out that goals had made him work harder but he did not have a goal at that time. Ki-yuen had not put effort into her studies and she said that she had luck in the exams. She was the only informant who attributed her academic performance to luck during examinations. These examples may describe the informants' self-concept of ability and effort. Above all, the examples can show that the informants ascribe their disappointing academic achievement to their lack of effort rather than their ability of learning although they confessed that their ability of learning was rather unsatisfactory.

What is more, when informants were asked to recall some experiences in which they could finally achieve feats or meet targets because of having put determined effort into the tasks. Some encouraging examples could be identified in the in-depth the interviews. Ki-yuen failed the Chinese History examination and she regretted not to have studied hard. Then she determined to be more diligent and finally she got good marks in it. Yan-kan put effort in Mathematics and she could finally pass the test. Of course, she felt very excited about her success. The above examples show that the informants ascribed their poor academic performance to the lack of effort rather than ability. Causal attributions concerns students' beliefs about why they succeed and why

they fail (Lumsden, 1999). Lumsden elaborates that “effort” is both internal and individually controllable; on the other hand, “ability” can be relied on to help learners with future challenges and learners have a strong desire for competence and will feel proud of it. According to Dweck, Chiu, & Hong (1995), when we ascribe our failures to the internal and uncontrollable factors, we would become much passive and reluctant to make every endeavour to learn. Covington (1984) supplements that failure-accepting students think that failure is a sign of lack of ability or skill and this belief reflects their lack of ability. On analyzing the informants’ causal attribution, it can be implied that most informants would not give up learning and they believed that they could attain academic success if they worked hard.

Students, who have failed repeatedly despite incessant efforts put into the tasks and finally become learned helplessness, will give up trying similar tasks in the future because they do not regard themselves as capable and their self-esteem will consequently deteriorate (Craske, 1988). With reference to Crake’s description about learner helplessness, in Star School, there was only one very similar case of learned helplessness that could be identified among the twenty informants of the project. It was Ho-man that had encountered incessant frustrations in learning and he had a very low self-concept in learning and ability. However, he claimed that he still enjoyed his school life in Star School.

#### **6.1.6 Findings of field data collected through participant observations**

In order to obtain complementary information about the school operation and the policies that were concerned with the Form 3 cohort, another group of ancillary informants, that is, the 10 class-masters of the Form 3 cohort were also approached and examined by means of participant observations which “generate data through watching and listening to what people naturally do and say...” (Brewer, 2000, p. 59). In this study, participation observations include a number of classroom teachings and field visits. The findings were used to compare and contrast the data collected from in-depth interviews with those 20 informants. Participation observation data, which provides triangulated evidence about both study participants and teachers, can reflect not only the study participants’ learning problems and characteristics but also the teachers’ work and their problems.

#### **6.1.6.1 Student characteristics and special needs**

The analysis in connection with learning experiences reveals some of the informants' special needs in learning, in particular, they were rather inattentive and not persistent in learning; they preferred to learn something simple and easy and join in activities in class and outdoors, for example, educational TV programmes, documentary films, training camp, learning English at McDonald's, etc. On discussing learning activities, Lumsden (1999) notes that students are more likely to invest themselves in meaningful activities. Kim (1999) also points out that students are eager to learn skills that give them control over their environment and students are motivated primarily through curiosity. The analysis also reveals that the informants found career-related courses useful to them, for example, computer design. Regarding the relevance of learning, Kim discovers that students are most highly motivated to learn when they believe teachers can help them or offer something of value and Kim suggests that teachers should show their students how they can apply their knowledge in the real world. The analysis finally identifies the type of teacher the informants favoured was those who were humorous in nature and would provide competitive games in class to enhance active learning. They also appreciated teachers who could give more free time to them and keep school time as short as possible. However, some of the informants did not like extended teaching hours, in particular, the additional class-master period which was arranged in the last period of each school day.

The above evidence provides better understanding about some of the characteristics of ALAs. Considering their special characteristics, it is very important for schools to trim and restructure the curriculum in the way that they can cater for the special needs of the ALAs. There is no doubt that the desk-bound seatwork activities and the chalk-and-talk teaching style cannot serve the purpose of motivating the ALAs to learn. All in all, the official curriculum guidelines for Hong Kong schools "Learning to learn – The way forward in curriculum" advocates that schools should make greater effort to motivate every student to learn in various environment (school, home, community) using a range of diverse and appropriate strategies and minimize or remove practices that de-motivate students (Curriculum Development Council, 2001).

#### **6.1.6.2 Teachers' effort and problems explored through participant observations**

Through classroom observations and real-life experience as an assistant class-master for 17 days<sup>1</sup>, I could procure a better understanding about the teachers' problems by experiencing, in the research site, the arduous tasks that the teachers were taking on to teach ALAs who are characterised by their weak foundation and low motivation to study and some of them cause discipline problems in class. Being a participant observer, I found that teachers devoted plenty of time to tailor-making materials to cater for their students' special needs; made a great effort to sustain their interest in learning; supervised those students who were off-task; maintained a quiet learning environment and handled disruptive behaviours frequently in class. On the other hand, class-masters needed to work long hours and do lots of non-teaching triviality, for example, checking students' assignment records so as to let their parents know their progress in the school and contacting parents in case of student absence from school. Furthermore, they had to attend regular meetings to discuss students' problems and develop educational programmes for the study participants in the Quality Circle<sup>2</sup> for Form 3. In short, teachers had to contribute their time, effort, patience, love and care to their students. My own real-life experience and observations in the research site really provided myself with authentic evidence of implementation of IE from the teachers' perspectives and I came to agree with Purkey & Novak (1996) that everything counts in the implementation of IE.

#### **6.2 Identification of recurrent themes: general satisfaction in school life and learning experiences and positive social relationships in school**

For the present, this section has provided a substantial analysis of study participants' school experiences in the case study school and its relationship with IE. In sum, the analysis reveals that in past years, students developed positive social relationships in the school; they could also acquire a sense of security and a sense of belonging students and parents had evident changes of attitude towards Star School.

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<sup>1</sup> During the period of my appointment as a supply teacher in Star School, I was designated as the assistant class-master of Class A of the Form 3 Cohort and I needed to take up the jobs performed by class-masters for 17 days, for example, attending 17 forty-minute class-master periods. .

<sup>2</sup> The ultimate goal of the Quality Circle was to secure maximum care for the needs of the students of the Form 3 Cohort and procure effective communication among mentor teachers of the same cohort.

The findings offer very substantial as well as anecdotal evidence to support a claim that a strong sense of belonging and security, positive peer relationship, mutual support, teacher-student relationship and teachers' trust and belief had evoked a volitional force from the study participants, which in turn catalyzed the formation of an internal drive among them to achieve the common goal—promotion to Form 4 in the coming academic year—despite difficulties. At this point in time, it can be implied that social relationship factor was activated among the study participants to facilitate them to strive for their common goal. According to the analysis, their perception of ability and effort was quite positive, in other words, they believed that they would do their school work well if they studied harder. This might have facilitated the formation of volitional force for the informants to study harder. The analysis also exhibits some student characteristics and special needs. Schools should trim and restructure the curriculum in the way that they can cater for the special needs of the ALAs. Another aspect concerns ancillary informants—teachers of the Form 3 cohort. Through classroom teaching observations and participant observations, it was also discovered that the teachers' work was heavy, difficult and also very enervating; most of all, their influences on students was important and significant. Because of the contribution of teachers to IE, it was evident to realize the importance of 'People'—'teachers' as one of the important five P's of IE.

In addition to the above findings, in the process of analysis, I also affirmed the emergence of the following recurrent themes in connection with the implementation of IE in the case study school: "general satisfaction in school life and learning experiences" and "positive social relationships in school". Social relationships in school can be categorized into peer-relationship and teacher-student relationship. On the other hand, the positive social relationships in school, attitudes towards school, sense of belonging and successful experiences are reflected in the informants' general satisfaction in school life. Learning experiences, which the informants had mentioned such as generic skills, value and attitude, are the milieus of learning processes, learning contents and the social environment for students to learn how to learn.

In a bid to further examine the relationships between study participants' school experiences and IE, the following section focuses on the discussion about how the study participants could procure general satisfaction in school life and learning experiences, close social relationships in school in past years under the ecosystem of the school where IE was being implemented.



### **6.3 Factors facilitating study participants to acquire general satisfaction in school life and learning experiences, sense of belonging, positive social relationships and teacher-student relationships and mutual support**

A genuine inviting school should exhibit positive relationships in all of its endeavours. Invitational learning should also provide a fresh global view of how schools can organize and create the most advantageous environment and offer the most positive educational services for all students in the school (McBrien, 1990). With reference to McBrien's suggestions on further investigating the positive relationships and positive educational services in the school, it was necessary to discover how the study participants could obtain general satisfaction in school life and learning experiences, close social relationships, mutual support, team collaboration and a strong sense of belongings in past years. To this end, the analysis has endeavoured to identify the following seven factors: (1) adoption of heterogeneous pupil grouping; (2) establishment of class identities; (3) fulfillment of students' physiological and affiliative needs; (4) teacher beliefs and the promotion of success; (5) conveying care, trust, respect and positive expectation as motivators; (6) provision of opportunities for developing student potentials and (7) development of individual growth through experiential learning.

#### **6.3.1 Adoption of heterogeneous pupil grouping**

Grouping pupils aims to facilitate teaching and learning in class. Grouping pupils at random or placing them in parallel classes and grouping by attainment have been chief methods employed in Hong Kong. The method of grouping pupils in secondary schools is entirely an internal matter to be decided by the principal and his teachers. Regarding grouping of pupils in secondary schools, Yau (1979) states that homogeneous grouping, in which pupils are assigned into different groups on the basis of ability or attainment, develop inferiority complex which reduces motivation and progress. Even though top stream pupils might often suffer anxiety due to high expectations imposed on them.

Since its foundation in 1989, Star School had employed ability grouping or homogeneous group throughout the whole school and thus aroused much negative emotion among students and caused disruptive behaviour in class. Teachers tended to object to teaching bottom classes. The bottom class pupils may be so discouraged by

one another and even by the teachers that they may soon give up trying to learn and instead they spend their time and energy creating trouble in the classroom and school. As one of the strategies in accordance with IE, Star School had adopted planned heterogeneous grouping for the cohort of the study participants since 2003/2004, in which pupils were deliberately assigned so that each class had a similar range of ability, attainment and other characteristics, that is, all classes were parallel. As the interview data reflected, most of the informants favoured such a school policy because they could develop close peer-relationship and good teacher-student relationship, co-operation and a strong sense of belonging; they learnt collaboratively and good students could help weak students. Above all, they felt encouraged in the mixed ability grouping and they would not laugh at the students with low ability. They also agreed that ability grouping resulted in labeling effect, which would undermine the self-esteem of underachievers and evoke negative emotions. However, a couple of informants thought that in ability grouping, competitions would arise in the class so that students would work harder to keep pace with others; at the same time, good students would not be affected by misbehaving students in learning.

According to Yau, (1979) in the twentieth Century when the main aim of education is to educate all children and to prepare them for citizenship, the grouping of pupils by attainment with all its disadvantageous effects should not be practised. The present study indicates that the cohort benefited from this inviting strategy. In the group of this type, a social and educational advantage is claimed. Also, since the teacher could teach a heterogeneous class as a class, he must treat them as a collection of individual (Yau, 1979).

### **6.3.2 Establishment of class identities**

Another inviting strategy regarding ‘Place’ was employed by the school with a view to establishing class identities and eliciting a sense of belonging. In this strategy, a big picture of an animal, which represented the qualities of the class, was posted on the wall outside each classroom. Some informants said the pictures brought them good memories about their classes and a lot of fun and thought that the pictures could really describe the personalities of the classmates. Their feedbacks on the strategy were quite positive. For example, Ki-yuen said, “It’s (the picture) a goat. It means that most of our classmates are clever. Goat is gentle but I am not gentle. I am a bit rude. So I try my best to be more obedient.” The informants’ responses to the strategy disclosed

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that they accepted the qualities of the animals and it can be implied that class identities were thus established. Regarding the sense of belonging, Raffini (1996) points out that all humans are social beings with a basic desire to belong to a group and Lumsden (1999) also finds that students will be more intrinsically motivated to learn when they have a sense of belonging to the community.

### **6.3.3 Fulfillment of students' physiological and affiliative needs**

So far, the data collected in the study can provide extensive evidence to support a claim that Star School successfully fulfilled the students' physiological needs and affiliative needs because the analysis shows that the study participants felt secure, cared, connected both with classmates and teachers and also felt supported in the school. It was blatantly obvious that social relationship factor had been activated to facilitate learning. On the other hand, the school premises with adequate open spaces, greenery environment and well-equipped facilities, afforded a favourable learning environment for students. Moreover, they could attain general satisfaction in their school life and their feelings were quite positive at school most of the time. These components identified in the analysis, which are certainly pre-requisites to student motivation, had been created in Star School. According to Maslow (1954), humans have to fulfill their physiological and affiliative needs before they can self-actualize and become functioning people. Similarly, students cannot have a self-fulfilling and successful school life unless and until they feel safe; procure good relationships in school and positive feelings about their school. Therefore, Slavin (1997) warns that if students' basic needs, that is, physiological needs and affiliative needs are not met, learning will suffer.

### **6.3.4 Teacher beliefs and promotion of success in school**

What we are doing at present in most schools in Hong Kong is to cram knowledge into students through intensive classroom learning and competitive examination practice. As a result, a large number of academic losers are often produced because they have failed to meet with the requirements of the keen competitions in academic activities.

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The aims of Star School's policies of IE were to facilitate students, who are supposed to be underachievers, to procure positive and successful learning experiences through activity approach, for example, "Fashion Show" and "Charitable Voluntary Services" and project learning, as identified in this project, so that students' frustrations resulted from handling competitive examinations could be alleviated.

In line with invitational philosophy, the class-teachers (mentor teachers) of each class shared a common belief that their students are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly (Purkey and Novak, 1996). Through collaborative team work in the Quality Circle, a wide range of inviting strategies were implemented to facilitate the students to untap their potentials so that they would attain satisfaction in their school life and learning experiences, not necessarily in academic achievement. The teachers' positive belief in their students might have positive effects on the informants' causal attribution. McBrien (1990) claims that believing that all children are valuable, able and responsible creates a learning environment that nurtures the individual, establishes mutual respect, and lays the foundation for emotional stability.

#### **6.3.5 Conveying care, trust, respect and positive expectation on students as motivators**

The teacher questionnaires indicate that expectations of informants' teachers were quite explicit and simple. They merely expected them to study hard, behave themselves in class and procure good jobs in the future. First and last, they should not give up doing things easily. McBrien (1990) claims that, from an invitational perspective, the only real failure in life is to fail to try and therefore teachers should try their best to encourage the students to make every endeavour to try and encourage them to adopt an optimistic attitude in their lives.

In this study, most informants appreciated their teachers' care and unremitting encouragement. On fulfilling their teachers' expectations, some of the informants really spared themselves in the pursuit of progress in their school work. However, some of them encountered learning difficulties. For example, meeting teachers' expectation was no easy task for Ho-man and Yin-ho. Both of them did not like learning in the least. According to them, they did not give up as they had occasionally endeavoured to study hard for examinations. Discussing unsuccessful learning experiences, Crake (1988) claims that a state of learned helplessness emerges when a learner perceive that he lacks the ability to procure a desired outcome. They give up

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because they do not see themselves as capable of success and they believe they will gain a lot by refusing to try (Crake, 1988). Slavin (1997) therefore advocates that it is important for teachers to help students overcome learned helplessness. Teachers should convey their expectation that all students, not only the most able ones, are capable of learning. According to Lumsden (1999), both caring and high expectations are essential elements of enhancing student motivation. When students feel sincerely cared about and supported, their motive will be activated to procure total potential. Slavin (1997) also claims that patience of teachers on students' progress may also convey high expectations to students, thus increasing student motivation to achieve their goals.

As the teacher questionnaire reveals, it is the teachers' common belief that students are valuable and they have a natural potential for learning and are eager to learn. Because of this shared, important IE belief, most informants felt connected with their teachers and the school and they also felt cared and supported, which consequently facilitated the informants to trigger an internal volitional force to strive to learn and grow in the school. It can also be implied that teachers' care, trust, respect and positive expectations might have facilitated the informants to build up a stronger perception of ability and effort, which had been reflected in their perseverance in learning.

#### **6.3.6 Provision of opportunities for developing student potentials**

It is the belief of Star School that students possess untapped potential in all areas of human endeavour (Purkey & Novak, 1996) and through a whole-school approach, student human potential can best be realized by creating and maintaining an IE ecological environment through "places, policies, processes, programs and people" (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Regarding the students' responses to the goal of their school, the analysis shows that most informants could perceive the purposes of IE because they could explain to me that students should be helped develop their potentials through the operation of IE, especially the formal and informal curriculum. Most informants appreciated the good intention of their teachers who made the concerted effort to create successful experiences for them and really understood that their teachers were quite concerned about their academic performance. Examples abound in the interviews and the following serve to support the claim. With her teachers' encouragement, Ki-yuen became keener to participate in the extra-curricular activities.

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Through the activities, she discovered her potentials. Finally, she became more active in school. Ching-ching discovered her potential in leadership after joining in the student training camp. In the fashion show, study participants were provided a good opportunity to exhibit their creativity in the school event.

### **6.3.7 Development of individual personality growth through experiential learning**

According to the in-depth interview data, most informants were concerned about the provision with structured learning experiences in the areas of moral, emotional and spiritual education rather than upgrading their knowledge and abilities, especially the knowledge from the textbooks or about examinations. For example, Ying-ka and Ni-yi who expected to learn better emotion management skills and life skills. On the other hand, most informants expected the school to instill them with the importance of values and attitudes. For example, Ki-yuen thought that the teachers should teach students to obey the laws and not to join the triad society and Wah-ka emphasized that the school should educate students not to do illegal things after leaving school. It was surprising to discover that most of them did not emphasize the importance of academic success.

The above source of evidence has provided further understanding about some of the needs of the study participants. In connection with learning experiences, the official curriculum guidelines for Hong Kong schools “Learning to learn – The way forward in curriculum” states that the school curriculum should provide all students with “essential life-long learning experiences for whole person development in the domains of ethics, intellectual, physical development, social skills and aesthetics...” and should “help students to learn how to learn through cultivating positive values, attitudes and a commitment to life-long learning; develop generic skills and construct...” (Curriculum Development Council, 2001, p. 17). Moreover, students should be entitled to five learning experiences that correspond to the ‘moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic’ development in the aims of education’ (p. 32).

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Following one of the invitational P's—"programme", including formal and informal curriculum, Star School endeavoured to cater for the special needs of students by alleviating competitive learning atmosphere; promoting co-operation among students and student positive self-concept; enhancing successful and interesting learning experiences and facilitating healthy personality growth. As identified in the in-depth interviews and document reviews, the experiential learning programmes or school events included some of the following: Multiple Intelligence Challenge Training Camp and Student Camp for Class D; Volunteers Training and Voluntary charitable services and Project Learning. On analyzing the in-depth interview data and questionnaire data regarding study participants' feedback to the learning activities or school events, most informants claimed they learnt useful generic skills in the out-of-classroom activities and student training camps, such as communication skills and problem solving skills. Through project presentations, they developed some generic skills that could not be learnt from the textbooks. Some of the informants claimed they had become much more civic-minded and cultivated a caring nature through participating in voluntary services.

#### **6.4 Recognition of changes**

According to Purkey & Novak (1996), integrated changes are happening in the school where people are willing to work together to systematically affect practices in the whole school. However, many of the initiatives take time and may not have immediate gains; in other words, it is not easy to see the progress of ALAs, especially their academic achievement. What is more, it is commonly understood that the good image of a school builds on its students' excellent academic achievement. Teaching ALAs is really an enervating job. Teachers in Star School are of no exception and they need to suffer a bad image of the school that some parents had previously projected on it. However, the positive change of attitudes towards Star School from the stake holders — parents and the community could be ascribed to the school's goals of education and policies, the teachers' effort and contribution, the students' good behaviour, and their involvement in the community and most of all, parents' involvement in both school activities and policies, despite there being a lack of adequate academic achievement in the school.

In Star School, success started from small changes. To launch the innovation—the implementation of IE in the case study school in 2003, a Quality Circle was formed by 10 mentor teachers for Form 1 in 2003/2004 (i.e. the Cohort of Form 3 at the time of the research). The core group worked closely together with the school guidance team, discipline team and other departments concerned and was, most of all, authorized to work on tentative IE policies independently, which would be evaluated and reported to the school management at the end of the school term (2003-2004). Tentative IE policies implemented by such an action group were subsequently improved and adopted in the school in the following school years.

## **6.5 Summary of major findings – effects of Invitational Education on study participants and a review on inviting strategies and school events**

The precise account of the findings of the informants' experiences in school life and the seven factors of facilitating students to acquire general satisfaction in school life and learning experiences, sense of belonging, positive social relationships and teacher-student relationships and mutual support, which are discussed from Sections 6.1 to 6.3 can provide substantial evidence to answer the following research questions that are stated in Chapter 1:

1. In what ways have the school policies and strategies of the case study school in connection with Invitational Education influenced students' school experiences, particularly in their emotions, social relationships, attitude towards their school and learning, sense of belonging, personal aspirations and self-concept of ability and effort? And in what ways have such school experiences facilitated them to learn?
2. In what ways has the case study school developed and implemented its policies and strategies in connection with IE theories? And in what ways have the study participants responded to such policies and strategies?

In addressing Research Question 1, the present study has identified some policies and strategies in connection with IE that the case study school successfully implemented in facilitating students to acquire general satisfaction in school experiences, learning and positive social relationships in school. (*Refer to Table 6.1 indicating IE programmes of Star School—a summary with the conception of 5*



*invitational P's*) First, the adoption of heterogeneous pupil grouping effectively promoted positive peer relationship, which helped eliminate labeling effect on less able students and in return, the policy generated mutual support, team collaboration and a strong sense of belonging and also established a salient class identity for each class. Most importantly, with mutual support, a motivational force to study was sparked off among students and consequently they were bound to strive for good grades in the promotion examination. Second, the case study school made a concerted effort to cater for students' physiological and affiliative needs through provision of formal and informal school programmes, in particular, team work and experiential learning, which had created a positive, caring learning environment and also formed the prerequisite to untapping students' potential. Fourth, teachers of the case study school shared a common IE belief that students are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly. They also worked collaboratively through a quality circle, which was intended to figure out and experimentally implement IE programmes and policies. Gaining support from the IE belief, students were not easily susceptible to frustration in learning but more perseverant instead. Fifth, teachers' care, trust, respect and positive expectations on students activated their volitional force to achieve goals and enhance resilience in coping with difficulties. It was also discovered that study participants' self-perception in ability and effort was quite positive. With the presence of teachers' care, love and unremitting encouragement and the school's positive value education, students could gain healthy growth in personality and pursue personal aspirations. Last but not least, effective implementation of IE in the case study gained recognition from not only students and parents but also educational bodies as well as the community. In short, IE had resulted in 'changes' and 'chances' for both the students and the school.

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All things considered, the substantial data discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 can afford well-supported reference to address these questions of the study: how IE was implemented in Star School; how the study participants had responded to such policies and strategies and how they might have influenced the motivational dimensions of ALAs. The motivational dimensions in the analysis refer to “emotions, social relationships, attitude towards learning, sense of belonging, and self-concept of ability and effort”.

With reference to Portfolio of Invitational Education programmes of Star School (2003-2006) and the findings of the study, the school events or strategies were categorized in relation to the conception of invitational 5 P's, that is, “Place, Programme, Policy, People and Process” (Purkey and Novak, 1996), which has been discussed at full length in the literature review, and the findings are now presented in the table below. To provide convenient and easy reference, the study participants' responses or feedbacks on the corresponding events and effects on them are incorporated into the table so that their relationships can become more explicit. Cross-reference is also provided for referring to obtain access to relevant research data.

**Table 6.1**

IE programmes of Star School—a summary with the conception of 5 invitational P's

Area	School events or strategies identified	Students' responses or effects on them	Cross-reference
1 PLACE	- greenery environment and adequate open space	- students strolled round the school garden, relaxing or chatting with classmates - students found it warm, having a feeling of 'home'	- Informants' self-report - Participation observation
	- well-furnished learning environment e.g well-stocked library, well-equipped computer rooms, etc.	- students expected the teachers to use more audio-visual aids and computer-aided equipment in teaching and they were satisfied with the hardware provided	- Informants' self-report - Participation observations (Appendix 11) - School portfolio reviewed
	- A picture of an animal representing the class characteristics posted outside the wall of the sample's classrooms	- students found it amazing and agreed with the characteristics as described - a sense of belonging was developed - the classrooms brought students some good memories	- Informants' self-report - Participation observation (Appendix 11) - School portfolio reviewed
2 PROGRAMME	- Project learning since 2003	- students developed generic skills in addition to the subject matter - students were enthusiastic to participate in the activities - students did not like boring classroom-bounded teaching - co-operation among students developed - successful learning experiences promoted	- Project day - a visit to Space Museum - Reports on project learning (Appendix 11)
Formal			
2 PROGRAMME	- 6-day Multiple Intelligences Training Camp (February, 2003) - Student training camp on Cheung Chau Island (September, 2004)	- students developed generic skills, leadership skills and personal growth and the activities encouraged cooperation and mutual support - teacher-student relationship further developed in the activities - positive attitude towards life nurtured	- Informants' self-report - Reports on the activity (Appendix 11)
Informal			
	- Volunteer training day & Charitable voluntary services (October, 2005)	- civic-minded and caring attitude developed - generic skills trained - personal growth encouraged	- On-the-spot interview (Appendix 11) - Student questionnaires (Appendix 8)
	- Fashion Show (Organized by students) (July, 2006)	creativity and mutual support developed cooperation encouraged students found the event amazing	- report on the observations (Appendix 11)
	- Community Charitable services	- civic-minded and social responsibility developed - students experienced love and concern personal growth encouraged	- Informants' self-report - Student questionnaires (Appendix 8 and Appendix 11)
	- Grand Priz (Inter-class competition)	- cooperation, mutual support and a sense of belonging developed - proactive attitude towards learning encouraged - students found exciting and amazing to participate in the activities	- Informants' self-report - On-the-spot interviews - Student questionnaires (Appendix 7) - Reports on activities (Appendix 11)
	- Christmas Celebration Party	- teacher-student relationship further developed - a variety of fun-type of activities	- Participation observation report (Appendix 11)

Area	School events or strategies identified	Students' responses or effects on them	Cross-reference
3 POLICY	Extended school hours (40- minute class-master periods after normal school hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teachers gave tutorials to students</li> <li>- teachers checked assignments or conduct routine administration</li> <li>- some students complained the school day too long</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informants' self-report</li> <li>- School portfolio reviewed</li> <li>- Teacher questionnaires (Appendix 10)</li> <li>- Participant observations (Appendix 11)</li> </ul>
	Heterogeneous pupils' grouping for three consecutive academic years (since 2003-2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a sense of belonging, close peer relationship, teacher-student relationship developed; personal growth supported</li> <li>- labeling effect eliminated and inferiority complex alleviated</li> <li>- positive attitude towards learning encouraged</li> <li>- teachers would not object to teaching bottom classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informants' self-report</li> <li>- Teacher questionnaires (Appendix 10)</li> <li>- School portfolio reviewed</li> </ul>
4 PEOPLE	- assigning same class-teachers (mentor teachers) to each class for three academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher cooperation and mutual support encouraged</li> <li>- common goals shared</li> <li>- school policy implemented effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher questionnaires (Appendix 10)</li> <li>- School portfolio reviewed</li> </ul>
	- after-school remedial teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- underachievers felt supported</li> <li>- teacher-student relationship developed</li> <li>- students did not think 'detention' of this type was a punishment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation observation (Appendix 11)</li> </ul>
	- teacher training in invitational learning strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher shared with positive attitude towards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher questionnaires (Appendix 10)</li> <li>- School portfolio reviewed</li> </ul>
5 PROCESS	Evaluation on Implementation in IE made by experts of International Alliance of IE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school being supervised by experts of IE since 2003-2004</li> <li>- staff professional development in IE provided</li> <li>- self-concept theories shared by staff</li> <li>- image building in the community</li> <li>- school progress was recognized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School portfolio reviewed</li> </ul>
	<b>Quality Circle</b> Class-teachers (mentor teachers) for the cohort regular meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- class-teachers held regular meetings to plan activities for the cohort and discuss the problems and solutions to student problems</li> <li>- action research on school improvement carried out and evaluated</li> <li>- good work could be demonstrated through Quality Circle</li> <li>- 'ripple effect' obtained as good work was recognized by staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher questionnaires</li> <li>- School portfolio reviewed</li> </ul>

*Remark: 'School portfolio' refers to 'Portfolio of IE Programmes of Star School, 2003-2006', 'Action Plan of IE of Star School, 2003-2006' and 'Site Reports on Star School, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 submitted by the IAIE'*

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## Chapter 7

### Conclusions and Implications

#### 7.0 Introduction

This is an unprecedented study to investigate the school experiences of ALAs in a secondary school where IE was implemented in Hong Kong context. Findings of the study have provided invaluable insights and substantial evidence showing how the case study applied the cornerstone self-concept theory of IE to creating a positive, caring school ecosystem consisting of five important components—"People, Programme, Policies, Place and Process", which had effectively facilitated underachievers to acquire general satisfaction in school life and learning. To be specific, the inviting strategies could activate the student motivational dimensions, namely, social relationships, positive emotion, relatedness, intrinsic motivation, personal aspiration and self-perception of ability and effort. On the other hand, after four years' concerted efforts of the school staff, the case study gained recognition from not only students and parents but also educational bodies as well as the community. The framework of this chapter is therefore employed to draw implications from the work of the case study school.

#### 7.1 Invitational Education—an alternative for low-band schools in Hong Kong

Band-1 schools in Hong Kong are being regarded as the symbol of prestigious schools. As a result of elitism, which has been prevalent in Hong Kong education system for a long time, parents usually focus their attention on the schools' level of achievement and will undoubtedly choose band-1 schools as their first priority. Due to parents' choice, that is, 'supply-and-demand' principle, band-3 schools usually accept less able students. In fact, the education system is rather competitive, which is quite disadvantages to low-band secondary schools as well as ALAs.

Most students in Star School experienced frustrations in academic performance in primary schools before admitted to Star school and they were considered academic "losers" in such an examination-oriented and competitive

learning atmosphere. Therefore, they gradually developed very low self-concept as well as negative self-perception of effort and ability in learning during pre-secondary education. As the present study reflects, the application of self-concept theories in Star School through the five invitational P's, namely, "people, programme, process, policy and place" could generate positive effects on students. The school managed to put inviting philosophy into practice by activating social motivation factors, that is, the need for affiliation and the need for attachment. Social motivation, which is the most significant factor among the student motivation dimensions, has much contributed to the success of school policies and strategies. A sparkle of motivational force to learn could be identified because of the study participants' joy and enthusiasm to study in Star School and their active participation in school activities. All in all, the social motivation factor generated a volitional force to energize them to move from their goals to actions, ignoring environment distractions.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis, there are two related studies concerning the students' motivation and quality of life in Hong Kong low-band secondary schools. Lam (2003) attempted to provide evidence that students in the low-band and practical secondary schools tended to adopt a learned helpless motivation, accompanied with negative emotion. On the other hand, the findings of Pang (1999) showed that students' sense of achievement was not evident in their views of quality of life and sense of opportunity in a low-band secondary school. The findings of the present study seem to contrast sharply with the above studies. To put it more precisely, the study participants could secure positive social relationships and general satisfaction in their school life and learning experiences and their self-concept of ability and effort remained positive after studying in the case study school for a couple of years.

Regarding school life and learning experiences, study participants in the school envisaged five learning experiences that correspond to the 'moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic' development through different types of life events which were planned and organized in the IE principles of 5P's. Although the students' academic achievement was not obvious at the time of the present study, the school had made the concerted effort to give high priority to achieve the aim of education as stipulated by Hong Kong Education Bureau: "enjoy learning, enhance effective communication, develop creativity and a sense of commitment (Curriculum Development Council, 2001, p. 15)". As identified in this research, the school had developed its own school-based teaching and learning programme according to the

needs and characteristics of their students and a student-focused curriculum framework with key learning areas (knowledge / concepts), generic skills, values and attitudes as the major components, which are fully discussed in Chapter 4 of this study and of which the themes are enumerated as follows: gaining sense of competence, practising critical thinking and social skills, enhancing positive attitude and value, cultivating positive behaviour and personality growth and realizing personal strength.

Because of the discrepancies between the above studies and the present study, the successful experiences of Star School can contribute invaluable insights to the relationships between student self-concept theories and student achievement and IE is obviously an alternative for schools receiving ALAs.

## **7.2 Creating five important elements of school ecosystem of motivating underachievers to learn**

No one is born with a self-concept and it is learned from one's external world and the people he has met (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Students spend most of their time at school. Clearly, schools, next to home, profoundly exert the single greatest influence on how students perceive themselves and their abilities. Unfortunately, studies have indicated a decline tendency in student self-concept when students continue to study in school (Griffore & Bianchi, 1984; Harper & Purkey, 1993; Silvernail, 1987). In contrast, in a longitudinal study of 175 middle-level students, Purkey and Stanely (1994) discovered that it is less likely for the students who are learning in an inviting environment to experience a decline in self-concept as students do in less intentionally supportive schools. Therefore, Purkey & Novak (1996) contend that promoting positive self-concept is of paramount importance in school through inviting strategies.

In nature, an ecosystem involves the dynamic interactions between plants, animals, people and their environment in a particular area and they work together to form a functional unit (Odum & Barrett, 2005). In reality, the ecosystem can be a school environment, of which the culture and climate affect student motivation for learning as well as personal growth. Odum & Barrett (2005) point out that in a natural ecosystem, life survives on microorganisms, minerals, water sources and the local atmosphere and the ecosystem is made functional by creating the interaction of the three basic components: the community, the flow of energy and the cycling of

materials such as carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, etc. Similarly, in an educational context, students live, learn, grow and interact more actively and effectively with the ecosystem that is composed of these important elements: “policy, people, place, process and programme” (Purkey and Novak, 1996). Additionally, teachers’ trust and care for students amounts to “nutrient” which is indispensable to the cultivation of students’ positive self-concept and acquisition of positive social relationships in school. Purkey (1970) claims that when the learner’s self-concept enhances, his academic success will emerge finally. There is no denying that school has great influence on students’ self-concept.

It is well-known that academic achievement is highly emphasized in Hong Kong and plays a dominant role in affecting the adolescents’ emotion state. Academic success or failure appears to be as deeply rooted in concepts of the self. According to Craske (1988), repeated failures in academic achievement evoke learned helplessness, which is likely to develop among ALAs in school. Gradually, their self-esteem will deteriorate. To foster student motivation of ALAs, it is imperative to construct an ecosystem comprising the above important factors, in which students can enjoy satisfactory school life, acquire successful learning experiences and positive social relationships.

Although Star School projected a very negative image in the community in the past and it accepted very academically low students, the school and its staff had made a concerted effort to nurture their students. As a result, it gained recognition from students, parents, the community and educational bodies. The case of Star School is worthy of a further examination because of its significance..

### **7.3 The journey to Invitational Education**

As reflected by the Principal of Star School, on the journey to IE, the school experienced conflicts among staff and encountered difficulties in its planning and implementation on the preliminary stage. It was really a great challenge to launch anything new in such a school, especially the application of new conception of IE. Purkey and Novak (1996) point out that IE regards ‘People’ as one of the most important elements in its 5 P’s. In an educational context, “people” refer to principals, teachers, clerical staff, parents and students. On the other hand, Morrison (1998) notes that “People” are the main obstacle on the way to change in educational institutions



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because change involves people and brings anxiety and uncertainty together. People respond to changes differently. Some staff resist, some show reservation, and some take the initiative in implementing innovation.

Successful innovation depends on changing people and providing means of improving eagerness to change (Hoyle, 1969). It is also important to exhibit the effects of change to the staff in order to encourage them to join in the implementation and develop further change collaboratively. When people see the effects, they change their attitude towards the change, which can change the management in turn. Above all, the change, even very small and minor, should start to create a culture of collaboration (Robbins and Finley, 1998). In Star School, success certainly started from small changes. The strategic application of Quality Circle formed by 10 enthusiastic teachers in 2003-2004 became an effective way to spread the innovation in connection with IE and gained the recognition of the whole school in a later stage of the development process.

My journey to the completion of the thesis has almost come to end. It is high time to draw significant implications from the study. To begin with, no one is born with self-concept and it is learned from the external world. School is of vital importance to students because it exerts great influence on student self concept, which affects their academic achievement in turn. It is important to construct an ecosystem comprising these important factors – “place, programme, policy, process and people”, in which students can enjoy satisfactory school life and activate their motivational dimensions, namely, social relationships, positive emotion, relatedness, intrinsic motivation, personal aspiration and self-perception of ability and effort. The implementation of IE was quite a challenging innovation for Star School and so is it for all schools. ‘People’ is the most important factor in the five P’s because successful innovation depends on changing people, in particular, students, parents and school staff. The teachers’ belief systems and methods of teaching should also be adjusted accordingly. Through creating a culture of collaboration, all staff members of the school work together to share common goals of the school. Teachers’ work is enervating but rewarding. The journey to IE is arduous but apparently the effects on

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students are significant and it is worthwhile. This case study can provide invaluable experiences as well as inspiring insights for low-band schools on how to nurture the ALAs, most of whom are neglected in such an academic-oriented learning environment and competitive learning atmosphere. All in all, schools and teachers demand determination and courage to set off the journey to IE.

#### **7.4 Limitation of study and future research**

Criticism made by the positivists on case studies is that they usually focus on relatively small numbers of cases and researchers also find it hesitant to make generalizations on the case from the data. In this case study, the methods of collecting data were triangulated, persistent and prolonged. As a result, the study has successfully captured a group of academically low students' school experiences through in-depth interviews, which were original, authentic, lively, vivid and interesting and has also acquired rich and deep understanding about the study participants' motivational dimensions under the influence of the ecosystem of Invitational Education. However, in this case study, the focus of the instance of the phenomena is "exploring psychosocial personal school experiences of a group of academically low students in a band-3 school where IE is being implemented". To further bridge the gap between the inviting theories and student motivation theories, it is suggested to apply the framework of the present study to an investigation into a group of more able students of a secondary school where IE is implemented. Researchers may find it interesting to see if similar data can be obtained in the case study school. In short, the present study has formed archived data as a basis for secondary analysis in further research concerning any aspects of IE.

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## Appendix 1

### Research Proposal Submitted to Star School

#### School of Education, University of Durham

#### Research Project of Doctorate in Education

*\*To protect privacy, some personal information on the live document has been replaced by "XXX".*

#### **Researcher:**

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**Field of Research** : Student Motivation and Students' School Experiences

#### **Title of Research**

Exploring a Group of Students' School Experiences in a Low-band Secondary School  
in Hong Kong: an Ethnographic Case Study

#### **Extracts of Research Outline**

##### **Background to the Study**

Your school has been making an attempt, in accordance with the inviting philosophy, to create a school of care and love since 2003, in which students may feel secure, encouraged, cared and interested in doing things. Although most of the students, whom are allocated to your school by the EMB, are low band students, that is, academically low achievers, your school believes that they are able to learn and valuable as individuals and that you have made every effort to ensure that every individual student has a reasonable chance of victory because you think that students

who experience repeated success in school are likely to develop positive experiences about themselves.

Considering that low band students have suffered great frustrations in academic achievement since primary education, based on the inviting philosophy, your school has developed interactional strategies to abate students' feelings of frustration and elicit students' positive experiences, in particular, their successful experiences, in not only academic achievement but also extra-curricular activities, positive attitudes towards school as well as learning, a sense of belonging and good relationships with school staff, teachers and schoolmates. The positive school experiences are believed conducive to the enhancement of your students' self-esteem, growth in their personalities and academic achievement.

Invitational education has been being implemented in your school since 2003. At the same time, the cohort of Form 3 of academic year 2005-2006 has experienced invitational education for a couple of years since 2003. In collaboration with the Chinese University of Hong Kong, your school conducted a school self-evaluation project in September 2004. In one of the evaluation reports in connection with the domains in students' sense of achievement in school, attitude towards school and relationships in school, such a cohort of Form 3 students recorded the highest ratings in these domains as compared with the other forms. Such a case is quite significant and worth further investigating if there are any significantly emergent patterns in the setting.

### **Aims of Research**

The present study is principally an investigation of the nature of school experiences of a sample of Form 3 students in a Hong Kong secondary school, which has endeavoured to elicit positive experiences from academically low achievers through different school interactional strategies; and the meanings the students attach to their school experiences. To be specific, the study attempts to explore the students' feelings in school, perceptions of the school operation, difficulties encountered in learning, attitudes towards school, relationships in school and beliefs in their academic ability and how their feelings, experiences and beliefs have influenced their school life in the past couple of years.

The second purpose is to extend my understanding of school operation through the students' personal accounts. It is hoped that the richness of the students' experiences in their own terms proffers a counterweight to the depth of the study. On

analyzing the rich qualitative data collected through informant in-depth interviews, researcher's onsite participant observation and review of relevant documents, I can discover and describe the culture of the school and obtain a fuller picture of the school operation with invitational education and their possible or potential influences on the sample. Thus, the findings of the study can serve to answer the following evaluative questions to investigate how the school strategies have fulfilled the needs of students from the insiders' eyes.

### **Proposed Time Frames**

December, 2005	Discussing the arrangement of the research with the principal and teachers concerned Piloting interview schedules
January - July, 2006	Data collection Staying in the sample school and collect ethnographical data

## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire for Student Motivation (used in the pilot studies) (Researcher Copy)

(\*The questions will be mixed up in the live student copies.)

#### Adaptive Motivational Domains

##### Mastery goals

1. Whenever I encounter any difficulty in doing schoolwork, I will go on working hard until I can find the solution to it. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 1* )
2. I always take note of the mistakes in my schoolwork and I avoid the same mistakes in the future. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 2* )
3. I like learning challenging new things. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 11* )
4. I always think about what I have learnt from my teachers or the books I have read. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 4* )
5. I try hard to do my schoolwork better because I am interested in it. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 5* )

##### Questions added to the question pool:

- a. ***Ability is indispensable to successful learning.***  
(New question no. as appeared in the second version: 9 )
73. ***I like to read or write when I have free time.***  
(New question no. as appeared in the second version: 28 )

##### Self-regulated learning strategies

6. At home, I finish the things that my teachers told me to do in class on the same day. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 23* )
7. I plan my time to do my schoolwork and study for the tests and exams on my own. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 24* )
8. When I have problems in schoolwork, I look for the solutions from other references myself. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 58* )
9. I make the effort to read the references or notes that my teachers tell us we

should.

*(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 59 )*

### **Intrinsic motivation**

10. As for me, learning is very unpleasant. **(Reversed scale)** *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 60 )*
11. I can have creative ideas on my schoolwork. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 6 )*
12. I would prefer to ask for help when encountering problems rather than solve problems by myself. **(Reversed Scale)**
13. I am willing to do the schoolwork or tasks, which are interesting or useful to me. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 13 )*

### **Causal Attribution**

#### **Attribution of success in schoolwork to external factors**

14. I can do well in my schoolwork because it is easy and simple for me. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 3 )*
15. I can do well in my schoolwork because my teachers explain things clearly to me. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 15 )*
16. I can do well in my schoolwork because I have good luck. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 68 )*

#### **Attribution of success in school to internal factors**

17. I can do well in school because I am a clever student. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 53 )*
18. I can do well in school because I have mastered effective study skills. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 54 )*
19. I can do well in school because I am hard working. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 18 )*

#### **Attribution of failure to internal factors**

20. I cannot do well in school because I am stupid. *(Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 61 )*
21. I cannot do well in school because I do not work hard. *(Question no. as appeared*

*in Student Copy: 25)*

### **Attribution of failure to external factors**

- 22. I cannot do well in school because I do not have good luck. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 21* )
- 23. I cannot do well in school because the things I learn are difficult for me. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 7* )
- 24. I cannot do well in school because my teachers do not explain things clearly to me. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 65* )

### **Maladaptive Motivational Domains**

#### **Performance goals**

- 25. I always try hard to improve my schoolwork because I want to obtain higher grades on them. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 72* )
- 26. Obtaining good academic results can show to others that I am a capable student. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 41* )
- 27. I feel good at school when I can do the work that the other classmates cannot. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 42* )
- 28. It is more important for me to obtain good results or win a prize rather than learning new things or skills. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 43* )
- 29. I feel very bad when teachers or classmates may notice my mistakes in class. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 44* )

#### **Extrinsic motivation**

- 30. I will still work hard if even there are no tests or exams. (**Reversed scale**). (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 45* )
- 31. When I fail in schoolwork, tests or exams, I will lose confidence and interest and I will stop working hard. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 31* )
- 32. If I am given a choice in schoolwork, I will choose easier tasks. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 32* )
- 33. I try to do well in schoolwork, tests and exams so that I can obtain praise or rewards from my family members and teachers. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 33* )
- 34. I am working hard to get higher qualifications now so that I can procure a well-paid job in the future. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 34* )



### 35. Deleted in the second version.

#### Work avoidant orientation

- 36. If there is no much hard work at school, I like to go to school. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 36* )
- 37. I sometimes copy other classmates' work. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 37*)
- 38. I am able to do better in my schoolwork but I do not work hard. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 38* )
- 39. I do not want to ask my teachers any questions or do any tasks in front of other classmates. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 39* )
- 40. I have a habit of starting work when the last minute comes. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 40* )

#### Self-worth

- 41. I do not do well in my schoolwork because it is not interesting. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 46* )
- 42. I do not do well in my schoolwork because I do not take it serious. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 47* )
- 43. I do not do well with tests and exams because I do not study the right materials. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 48* )
- 44. I avoid doing the things that I think I cannot do well or I will certainly fail. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 49* )

#### Learned helplessness

- 45. My parents and teachers have very high expectation on my academic performance. (**Reversed Scale**) (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 50* )
- 46. I cannot do my schoolwork better even I work harder. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 66* )
- 47. I seldom try to study hard. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 67* )
- 48. No one can help me change my low intelligence in learning. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 10* )
- 49. I have never got successful and pleasant experience with my schoolwork. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 14* )
- 50. I am not clever enough to deal with schoolwork.

## Negative Emotion

- 51. I feel very frustrated about my schoolwork. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 16*)
- 52. **Deleted in the second version**
- 53. I feel worried about my schoolwork. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 20*)

## Supporting Motivational Domains

### Self-concept on Academic performance

- 54. I am as clever as the other classmates. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: deleted*)
- 55. I can do well what my teachers tell me to do. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 26*)
- 56. Overall, I am confident in my schoolwork (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 64*)

#### New question added to the question pool:

- 74. ***I am as clever as the other classmates.*** (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 69*)

## Family support and expectation

- 57. **Deleted in the second version**
- 58. When I have problems with schoolwork, my parents or family members will help me. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 17*)
- 59. My parents or family members do not encourage me to join in extracurricular activities. (**Reversed Scale**) (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 29*)
- 60. My parents or family members always praise and reward me on my improvement in schoolwork or academic results. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 30*)
- 61. My parents do not care about my academic performance. (**Reversed scale**) (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 71*)
- 62. My parents are willing join in the activities with teachers and other parents. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 22*)
- 63. **Deleted in the second version**

### **Relationships in school**

- 64. I have a good relationship with my teachers. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 55* )
- 65. I feel encouraged and supported at school. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 56* )
- 66. I get on well with other students. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 19* )

### **Attitude towards school**

- 67. I have found myself more interested in schoolwork since I came to study in this school. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 35* )
- 68. I have got much chance of developing other aptitudes of mine in addition to obtaining good academic results. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 51* )
- 69. My teachers help me do my best. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 52* )
- 70. I have got much successful experience in this school. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 70* )
- 71. **Deleted in the second version**
- 72. The things I learn in this school are important to me. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 27* )

### **Aspiration / Goal of life**

- 75. **Deleted in the second version**
- 76. In school, we should learn how to be a responsible and useful person to society. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 62* )
- 77. It is more important for my teachers to teach us how to judge wisely what is right and what is wrong rather than helping us improve academic results. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 63* )
- 78. I want to go on studying after finishing secondary education. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 8* )
- 79. I have a dream that I can be an important or a successful person one day. (*Question no. as appeared in Student Copy: 57* )

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Questions for Pilot Interview (used in the pilot studies)**

##### **(Researcher Copy)**

1. What have you found in this school is the most valuable or important to you?
2. What are your strengths? Can you develop your potential in this school? If so, in what ways?
3. Which subject do you like most? Why?
4. What do you like about this school? Why?
5. How do you feel when you come to school every morning?
6. Do you think you have a happy school life in this school? Why so or why not?
7. Do you understand your lessons most of the time? Why so or why not?
8. Are you willing to talk about your school with your friends or family members?
9. What is the most unforgettable activity you have ever had in this school?
10. Are you satisfied with your academic performance since the beginning of the term?
11. What do you wish to do after Form 5? Why
12. Do you wish to study in a university? Why so? Why not?

## Appendix 4

### Questionnaire used for Sampling 4A English Version (translated from Chinese into English)

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Class: F. ( ) Class No. : ( )

Sex : Boy / Girl

Duration : 5-7 minutes

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

**This is an academic research, which aims to study how you view and feel about your school life and schoolwork. Please read each question carefully and circle the number which best reflects your views. '1' means 'you strongly disagree with the view or feeling that the statement describe' and '5' means 'you strongly agree with the view or feeling that the statement describes'. Please do not miss any items. If you do not want to do this survey, please feel free to leave this questionnaire blank.**

No.	Question Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I have a good relationship with my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I can do well what my teachers tell me to do.	1	2	3	4	5
3	No one can help me change my low intelligence in learning.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I feel encouraged and supported at school.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Overall, I am satisfied with my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I have got much successful experience in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My teachers help me do my best.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have found myself more interested in schoolwork since I came to study in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
9	My teachers and my family members have never got any expectation on my academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I have got much chance of developing other aptitudes of mine in addition to obtaining good academic results.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I feel hopeless about my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I do not have any hope about my future.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I get on well with my schoolmates.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I feel respected by teachers in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
15	The things I learn in this school are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Question Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
16	I have never got any successful or pleasant experience with my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5
17	Learning is very unpleasant to me.	1	2	3	4	5
18	Overall, I have a happy school life in this school.	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix 4

### Questionnaire used for sampling 4B Chinese Version (Live version for research)

#### 問卷調查

姓名： \_\_\_\_\_ (請以正楷書寫) 簽署： \_\_\_\_\_  
 班別： F. ( ) 班號： ( ) 性別： 男 / 女  
 時限： 5-7 分鐘 日期： \_\_\_\_\_

請按指示完成問卷：

這是一份學術研究問卷，目的是想了解你在學校生活的體驗和對學業成績的看法和感受。  
 請細閱下列每句，然後圈出最能代表你意見的數字。「一」表示你非常不同意句子所描述的情景或感受，而「五」則表示你非常同意句子所描述的情景或感受。請勿遺漏任何題目。

如果你不願意參與這次問卷調查，請勿填寫任何資料。

多謝合作！

題 號	題 目	非常不 同意	不 同意	未 肯定	同意	非常 同意
1	我和老師關係良好。	1	2	3	4	5
2	老師要求我做的功課，我都能應付自如。	1	2	3	4	5
3	沒有人可以幫到我改變我讀書的資質。	1	2	3	4	5
4	在學校裏，我感受到鼓勵和支持。	1	2	3	4	5
5	整體而言，我的學業成績尚算滿意。	1	2	3	4	5
6	在這間學校裡，我獲得很大的成功感。	1	2	3	4	5
7	我的老師能幫助我做到最好。	1	2	3	4	5
8	自從進入這所學校就讀，我對學習的興趣濃厚了。	1	2	3	4	5
9	老師和家人對我的學業成績從未抱有任何期望。	1	2	3	4	5
10	我在這間學校，除了學業成績外，我還有很多機會發揮其他的才華。	1	2	3	4	5
11	我對學業成績，已感到心灰意冷。	1	2	3	4	5
12	我對我的將來毫無憧憬。	1	2	3	4	5
13	我和同學相處融洽。	1	2	3	4	5
14	在學校裏，我感受到老師對我的尊重。	1	2	3	4	5
15	在這間學校，我所學到的知識，對我很重要。	1	2	3	4	5
16	學業成績從來都沒有給我成功或愉快的經驗。	1	2	3	4	5

題 號	題 目	非常不 同意	不 同意	未 肯定	同意	非常 同意
17	對我來說，學習是一件很不愉快的事情。	1	2	3	4	5
18	整體而言，我的學校生活是很愉快。	1	2	3	4	5



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## **Appendix 5**

### **Letter of Invitation to Study Participants 5A English Version (translated from Chinese into English)**

Dear Form 3 students,

How are you doing?

My name is George Poon. I am a student of University of Durham, taking Doctorate in Education. My doctoral thesis studies how students view the quality of their school life and how they react to the school policies.

I would like to invite all of you to complete the following questionnaire. The data collected from the questionnaires will only be used in my research and I guarantee that I will not disclose your names or any information that I collect to anyone. If you are willing to join in this survey, please complete the questionnaire as instructed. After I have analyzed the questionnaires, I will invite some of you to attend interviews, sharing with me your school life and learning in school. If you are not willing to join it, please feel free to leave this questionnaire blank.

Thank you for your help.

I wish you have great progress in your schoolwork.

Poon Kwok Leung

January ,2006

**Appendix 5**  
**Letter of Invitation to Study Participants**  
**5B (Chinese Version) (Live version for research)**

\_\_\_\_\_同學：

你好！

我是潘國良老師。我現正在英國德林翰大學 (University of Durham, England) 修讀教育博士學位課程。我的博士論文，是研究學生對學校生活質素的觀感和他們對學校的反應。

請各位同學協助本人完成以下簡單的問卷，所收集到的資料只會作上述研究之用，本人保證不會涉露任何同學姓名和有關問卷的資料。如果你願意參與這次問卷調查，請按指示完成問卷。本人完成問卷分析後，將再邀請個別同學與本人作進一步的面談，話題都是環繞學校生活和學習問題。如果你不願意參與，請勿填寫任何資料。

多謝你們的幫忙！

祝學業進步！

潘國良

二零零六年一月 日

## Appendix 6

### **Consent Form for Interview** **6A English Version (translated from Chinese into English)**

University of Durham, England  
Doctorate in Education  
Consent Form for Academic Study

Name of Researcher: George Poon

Theme of Study:

Exploring academically low achievers' perspectives on the quality of their school life and their reaction to school policies.

Target participant of Study:

Form 3 students (2005-2006) who have got positive experiences or negative experiences in their school life, 10 for each group

Mode of Study:

- (1) Study participants will be interviewed by the researcher three times, sharing the experiences of their school life and any issues concerning learning in the school
- (2) All interviews will be audio-taped and the data collected during the interviews will be only used for the purpose of the research. Interviewers have the right to object to the recording during the interviews.

Period of Study: From January, 2006 to June, 2006

Duration of each interview: About 45 minutes to 60 minutes

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_ (Day) \_\_\_\_\_ (Month) \_\_\_\_\_ (Year)

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ ( Period \_\_\_\_\_ )

Venue: Office (Third floor, near the stair)

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Declaration of Researcher**

The information collected in this study is to be used for the purpose of the present study only. The names of the interviewees and their relevant information collected in the interviews will not be disclosed to anyone who is not involved in this project.

Name of Researcher: George Poon

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ (Day) \_\_\_\_\_ (Month) \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

## Appendix 6

### Consent Form for Interview 6B Chinese Version (Live version for research)

英國德林翰大學  
(University of Durham, England)

教育博士學位

學術研究批准書

研究人員姓名：潘國良

研究主題：探討學業成績稍遜的學生對學校生活質素的觀感和他們對學校的反應。

研究對象：學校生活有正面體會和負面體會的中三同學（二零零五年至二零零六度），各十名。

研究形式：

1. 分三次與研究人員面談，話題是環繞學校生活和學習問題。
2. 面談時將進行錄音，所收集到的資料只會作上述研究之用。受訪者可反對面談時進行錄音。

研究時期：二零零六年一月至二零零六年六月

面談時間：四十五分鐘至一小時

日期：二零零六年 月 日

時間： 時 分（第 節）

地點：三樓辦公室（近三樓樓梯）

受訪者姓名\_\_\_\_\_：受訪者姓名簽署：\_\_\_\_\_

研究人員聲明

本人所收集到的資料只會作上述研究之用，本人不會向與此研究無關人仕公開任何同學的姓名和有關資料。

研究人員姓名：潘國良      研究人員簽署：\_\_\_\_\_

日期： 二零零六年    月    日

## Appendix 7

### Questionnaire for Form 3 Invitational Education Programme (Grandpriz)

(This questionnaire was provided by Star school).

#### 7A English version (translated from Chinese into English)

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Class : \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Activity : \_\_\_\_\_ Activity : \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the answer that suits how you think about the statement.

1 In this activity,...

a) I can improve the relationship with my teachers.

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

b) I can improve my multiple intelligence.

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

c) I can enhance the sense of belonging to my class.

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

d) I can increase my interest in learning.

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

e) I can improve my problem-solving skills.

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

f) I can enhance the sense of belonging to my school.

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

g) I can enhance the relationship with my classes.

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

h) I can make more new friends.

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

i) I can enhance my sense of success.

---

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

j) We can enhance the co-operation among our classmates.

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

What I have learnt in this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Overall, I like this activity.

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree



## Appendix 7

**Questionnaire for Form 3 Invitational Education Programme (Grandpriz)**  
**(This questionnaire was provided by Star school).**  
**7B (Chinese Version) (Live version for research)**

### 中三活動評估

姓名：\_\_\_\_\_

班別：\_\_\_\_\_

日期：\_\_\_\_\_

活動名稱：\_\_\_\_\_

請圈出適合你的答案：

1 今次的活動能夠....

- a) 增進師生感情。  
極同意   同意   不同意   極不同意
- b) 提升本人的多元智能。  
極同意   同意   不同意   極不同意
- c) 加強本人對班的歸屬感。  
極同意   同意   不同意   極不同意
- d) 使我增加讀書興趣。  
極同意   同意   不同意   極不同意
- e) 使我提升解決困難的能力。  
極同意   同意   不同意   極不同意
- f) 加強本人對學校的歸屬感。  
極同意   同意   不同意   極不同意
- g) 增進同學之間的感情。  
極同意   同意   不同意   極不同意
- h) 使我認識更多新朋友。  
極同意   同意   不同意   極不同意

i) 使我增加成功感。

極同意 同意 不同意 極不同意

j) 加強本班同學的合作性。

極同意 同意 不同意 極不同意

其他得著: \_\_\_\_\_

2 整體而言，我喜歡今日的活動。

極同意 同意 不同意 極不同意

---

## Appendix 8

### Questionnaire for Form 3 Invitational Education Programme (Voluntary Services and Training)

#### 8A English version (translated from Chinese into English) (This questionnaire was provided by Star school).

##### Evaluation of Voluntary Service

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Class : \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Voluntary Service: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What were your duties in this voluntary service?
2. In this event, what did you contribute?
3. In this event, what was/were your favourable activity / activities?
4. In this event, what did you learn? What did you procure?
5. In this voluntary service, what was/were your unforgettable event/events?
6. How do you feel today?
7. Did you have any breakthrough in this event?
8. Other comments

\_\_\_\_\_

---

## Appendix 8

### Questionnaire for Form 3 Invitational Education Programme (Voluntary Services and Training)

#### 8B Chinese Version (Live version for research)

##### 義工服務檢討

姓名： \_\_\_\_\_

班別： \_\_\_\_\_

義工服務日期： \_\_\_\_\_

1. 你在今次義工服務，你負責做什麼工作？
  2. 你在今次活動，你付出了什麼？
  3. 你最喜歡的 項目 / 活動是什麼？
  4. 你在今次活動，你學會了什麼？有什麼得益？
  5. 你在今次義工服務中，最忘的經歷是什麼？
  6. 你在這天的感受是怎樣的？
  7. 你在今次活動中個人突破是什麼？
  8. 其他的意見
-

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## Appendix 9

### Letter to Form 3 Class-masters

#### 9A English version (translated from Chinese into English)

Dear Form 3 Class-masters,

How are you doing!

I am taking Doctorate in Education offered by University of Durham and I have just started my research. My doctoral thesis studies how academically low achievers view the quality of their school life and how they react to the school policies.

I would like you to invite Form 3 students to complete a simple questionnaire which will only be used in my research and I will not disclose the names of the respondents and any information collected from the questionnaires. After I have analyzed the questionnaires, I will invite twenty students to attend three in-depth interviews each, ten of whom tend to have positive school experiences and ten negative experiences. The interviews concern their school life and learning in school. This study lasts about 6 months. If your students are not willing to join in this survey, just ask them to feel free to leave their questionnaires blank.

The survey takes 5 to 7 minutes to complete and it should be administered on the same day for all classes. Please kindly return all questionnaires to me on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2006.

Moreover, if your classes hold any class activities, please let me know and I will try my best to attend them.

Thank you for your help!

Poon Kwok Leung  
6<sup>th</sup> January 2006

## Appendix 9

### Letter to Form 3 Class-masters 9B Chinese version (Live version for research)

各位中三班主任：

你們好！

我在英國德林翰大學 (University of Durham, England) 修讀教育博士學位課程，現開展研究工作。我的論文，是探討學業成績稍遜的學生對學校生活質素的觀感和他們對學校的反應。

請協助本人邀請中三同學完成一份簡單的問卷，所收集到的資料只會作上述研究之用，本人不會公開任何同學的姓名和有關問卷的資料。本人完成問卷分析後，將邀請對學校生活有正面體會和負面體會的同學，各十名，與本人進行三次深入面談，話題都是環繞學校生活和學習問題。這次研究計劃為期六至七個月。如果同學不願意參與這次問卷調查，請他們不要在問卷上填寫任何資料。

問卷調查需時五至七分鐘，請各班在同一日完成，並於一月十一日前交回本人。

還有，如貴班舉辦班會活動，請通知本人，屆時本人盡量出席。

多謝你們的幫忙！

潘國良

二零零六年一月六日

## Appendix 10

### Questionnaire for Form 3 Class-masters

University of Durham

School of Education

Doctorate in Education

### Questionnaire for Teacher

Name of Researcher : Poon Kwok-leung, George

#### I Aims of Research

The present study is principally an investigation of the nature of school experiences of a sample of Form 3 students in a Hong Kong secondary school, which has endeavoured to elicit positive experiences from academically low achievers through different school interactional strategies; and the meanings the students attach to their school experiences. The second purpose is to extend my understanding of school operation through the students' personal accounts. It is hoped that the richness of the students' experiences in their own terms proffers a counterweight to the depth of the study.

#### II Teacher Background Information:

- 1 Subject(s) taught (Form 3 classes) : \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 No. of Periods (Form 3 classes) : \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 No. of years being the classmaster/mister of the present class: \_\_\_\_\_

#### III Questions (For this part, two class-masters may put your answers together on ONE questionnaire)

*Please give free responses to the following questions:*

- 1 Describe briefly your students in the following aspects: academic performance, class discipline, attendance, general behaviour e.g. politeness, school uniform, responsibility, etc.
- 2 Most of your students (**Form 3**) are academically low achievers. What are your

beliefs that you think are important to you when you teach them **(Form 3)**?

3 What are your expectations on your students (Form 3)? (e.g. academic performance, conduct and discipline, attitude towards life and learning, etc.)

4 What are your strategies to achieve the following goals?

- establishing a class identity
- enhancing a sense of belonging and good relationship among students
- building up a good teacher-student relationship
- creating more successful experiences in school for students
- developing a good learning attitude and effective study skills (e.g. through projects)
- creating a good learning atmosphere
- cultivating students' responsibility and attitude towards life
- enhancing the understanding between teachers and parents
- maintaining good school attendance

5 How do you feel after teaching this cohort of students for three years / a couple of years? What are your gain and loss?

Name of Teacher : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 11

### Participant Observation Reports

#### 1 Volunteers Training Day and Voluntary Service

On the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2006, twenty-five study participants of the Form 3 cohort (2005-2006) joined in a volunteer training session in the morning and then they went to a public housing estate, where many elders were accommodated alone there. With the accompany of the teachers and social workers, they visited the elders and helped them with the housework, for example, cleaning the windows and floors. I spent about two hours with the study participants in the training sessions in Star School.

The participants were attentive and co-operative. They showed a keen interest on the activities. Sometimes they voiced out their opinions and shared their feelings in the group. The teachers taught them how to communicate with people and briefed the participants on the details of the voluntary services and something to be noted. Last but not least, the teachers reminded them of safety during the services.

After the services, they were requested to complete a short questionnaire, asking them what they had learnt in the activity and how they felt about the activity. The following are their written responses in the questionnaires:

*"I can help the elderly. I learnt how to do housework. I will help my mum with her housework. I felt very happy" (a male respondent).*

*"I contributed love and time to this activity. I learnt how to talk with the old people and how to clean the windows. I felt happy." (a male respondent).*

*"I contributed time and energy to this activity. I learnt how to talk with people. Team work is very important and we can help people. I had helped people with the house work. It is an unforgettable experience. I seldom do housework. Now I can help old people do housework." (a male respondent).*

*"The old couple let me see their family photos. I was very happy. It was an unforgettable experience to clean the toilet for the old people. I felt very tired but I was very happy. I learn how to communicate with people." (a female respondent)*

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*"I learnt how to do the cleaning. I learnt leadership skills in this activity because I was a team leader. I learn how to care about people." (a female respondent).*

In sum, the study participants found the activity interesting and useful to them although they felt tired. Most importantly, they learnt how to care about people and how to communicate with people.

## **2 The Project Day for the cohort—"Careers and Further Studies"**

As described in Chapter 4, in the academic year 2005-2006, the Form three cohort had to make choices on their careers and studies. To coincide their contemporary needs, the theme for the project assigned to them was "Careers and Further Studies". As the project required, they needed to visit different organizations and institutes and reported their findings through web page designs and presentations.

The school project days for the cohort were taken in Hong Kong Federation of Youth Group Jockey Club Sai Kung Outdoor Camp between April 6, 2006 and April 7, 2006. All Form 3 cohort [147 students], who were guided by their class-masters, had to attend the activity.

The programmes in these two days involved project presentations, group activities and some recreational activities, for example, barbecue.

The project presentations took place in six different activity rooms, one room for one class. Each class had split into different small groups, with 6 to 8 members in each group. Each member was required to involve in the presentations, in particular, taking turns to report their findings orally to their fellow classmates with the help of the computer software, PowerPoint.

The performance of each group's oral presentation would be assessed by their fellow schoolmates. The contents of the oral reports should include the general information about the institutions they visited, for example, its history, the admission requirements, etc., the findings of the interviews with people they contacted; most importantly, their conclusions and how they felt about the project.

During the stay with the cohort, I observed 10 presentations. I was very keen on collecting data about what they learnt in the project and they felt about it. Based on the presenters' oral reports, the summary on the two focuses was made below:

### ***What they learnt or procured in the process of project***

- obtaining very useful information about the universities and institutions
- this project being a good opportunity for them to explore their choices in studies and careers until it was too late to make their decisions
- feeling very uncomfortable when doing the interviews but interview skills could be practised
- becoming braver and more open in front of strangers
- mastering information technology skills when searching relevant information on the Internet
- learning to design questionnaires and interview questions and also present the relevant findings using a computer software—PowerPoint
- obtaining an in-depth understanding about the school life in universities
- learning something that they could not learn from the text-books e.g. interview skills and communication skills
- learning problem solving skills because they encountered difficulties and conflicts among members during the process.

### ***How the study participants felt about the project***

- co-operation among group members was very important in the completion of the whole project
- some members taking a very responsible and serious attitude towards the project but a few being irresponsible and indifferent to their contribution
- appreciating some members' valuable contribution to the project
- appreciating the favourable learning environment in universities and good nature of university students they encountered
- appreciating the quality of teaching in universities
- appreciating the freedom that university students could enjoy there
- appreciating the wide choices of subjects in tertiary institutions
- making decisions to study hard and pursue studies in universities
- complaining about the project being very difficult and time-consuming for students
- finding the project useful and interesting and determining to finish it and produce good reports as far as possible
- determining to obtain higher qualification to fulfill the admission of requirements of desirable universities and institutions

### ***Comments given by their teachers on the presentations***

- It was found that some of the presenters were unduly disturbed by the other students' noise. Students were reminded to keep quiet and be very attentive when attending to their classmates' oral presentations.
- A few students did not take a serious attitude towards the presentations.
- Some interviews in the project were found very interesting.
- Boys did much worse than girls.
- Some PowerPoint works were carefully prepared.
- There was room for some presenters to improve presentation skills.
- Some presenters lacked eye-contact while speaking to the audience.
- Some read the scripts word by word; instead, reports should be done in their own words and a summary should be given.
- Descriptions about the slides should be concise and pictures should also be relevant.

### **3 Classroom teaching observation reports**

According to the informants, English and Mathematics were the subjects that most of them found difficult to learn. To understand more about the work of the teachers and how students learnt in the classroom. During the field work in Star School, I was granted approval from the school to observe 4 formal classroom teachings, including 3 English lessons and 1 Mathematic lesson. All of them pertained to the Form 3 cohort.

Class B had a Mathematics lesson. In the Mathematics lesson, there were 31 students in this class. The students were quite noisy despite the presence of an observer. Some of them often fidgeted and some talked to their neighbours quietly. Even one girl was found sleeping at her desk. The teacher had to stop them several times. After a few minutes, they started to whisper to each other again but not very disturbing. She was quite patient and she explained everything carefully. Some were quite willing to finish the class-work as instructed and sometimes discussed with their neighbours. The teacher repeated things quite often and taught very slowly. I found that the students' abilities were quite varied.

Class C had an English listening lesson. There were 30 students. The class was practising listening skills with audio-taped materials. The lesson involved pre-listening activities, while-listening activities and post-listening activities. Students

were required to complete the tasks while listening to the audio tape. The class was very silent. They were quite obedient but they did not show much understanding what was going on in the listening lesson. Sometimes the teacher had to explain to them in very simple English.

In Class E, the study participants had an English grammar lesson. It was quite a small class, with only 14 students because it was a remedial group (students were especially selected for English remedial teaching). Students were given tailor-made worksheets. Most of the time, the teacher explained to them in Cantonese and then told them to finish the tasks on the worksheets. The girls were much keener to do the work but most of the boys were off-task. The teacher had to devote more time to helping those students who could not follow the teachers. A fat boy ignored my presence and slept in class.

In Class D, the students were having an English lesson. There were 20 students. The teacher did grammar revision with the class. She conducted the revision lesson in a competitive game—question-and-answer game, in which the class was divided into two groups and the two groups competed to finish the tasks in relation to grammar and the winners would get prizes. Most students were quite keen to raise hands and answer the teachers' questions. However, two boys, sitting next to me, were talking quietly, detaching themselves from the competitive atmosphere.

#### **4 Life-wide learning activities in English Language**

In Star School, there was a consensus among the English teachers that life-wide learning activities were worth organizing as these could help motivate students to learn the language in more interesting ways. The life-wide learning activities in English language, which the Form 3 cohort had come through in the past three years, were enumerated below:

In 2003-2004, all the cohort [Form 1] had a treasure hunt activity in Tuen Mun Park, in which they were required to search information in English on the Internet and completed tasks on worksheets before the activities and read instructions in English on the spot.

In 2004-2005, all the cohort [Form 2] was taken out to a McDonald's restaurant and they were required to communicate with the people there and ordered food they wanted in English.

##### **A Visit to Science Museum, Hong Kong**

On March 21, 2006, a visit to Hong Kong Science Museum was arranged for the cohort [140 students] as a wild-life learning activity in English Language. The visit started from 2 o'clock in the afternoon and finished at 5 o'clock in the evening.

Before the activity, students were required to search relevant information about the museum on the Internet and complete a worksheet each during the visit, which was written in both Chinese and English and include short questions, blank-fillings and some drawings.

I accompanied the cohort during the visit, observing how the students learnt and interviewing some of them with a focus on their attitude and their feedback on this event.

##### ***Student behaviour observed during the visit***

The following student behaviours were observed during the visit and reported below:

- Most students toured the museum and worked in groups.
- Some boys really tried the activities as instructed at the exhibits, for example,

playing the chess and jigsaw puzzle while girls preferred to stand and watch.

- Some students attended to the presentations about the exhibits very carefully, which they were encountering. However, some just walked around and gave a glance on the exhibits without observing them very carefully nor making more detailed inquiries about them.
- A few students were found very sluggish and they sat on the chairs provided in the museum, talking leisurely.
- Some read the instructions and elaborations about the exhibits very carefully and completed the worksheets immediately as required by their English teachers.
- A few did not complete the worksheets on the spot but they were found copying the answers from their classmates after the visit.
- Some read Chinese elaborations about the exhibits in the first place instead of English.
- Some students were very keen to explore the exhibits and able to explain the details about them to me, in particular, wind speed and direction.
- Some talked, played and laughed a lot during the visit; even a couple of students were found talking on their mobile phones during the visit.

#### ***On-the-spot interviews with students***

During the visit, I conducted very short unstructured interviews with some of the students at random with a focus on how they felt about the visit. The following was the summary of their feedback about the visit.

- not knowing exactly what they were expected to learn before the visit
- not understanding what to do on the worksheets
- preferring to study outside the school rather than learning in school
- obtaining more freedom outside the school as they could move around the place and discuss with other classmates without disturbing others, which might happen in the classrooms
- feeling very bored to learn and sleepy in the classrooms
- learning something that could not be learnt from the text-books in the museum
- finding it more interesting to learn in the museum
- hoping to have this sort of learning activity once a month
- finding most exhibits in the museum interesting
- finding the visit worthwhile although they needed to pay for the travelling expense and spending extra time travelling to the museum

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### ***Survey result and report on the visit to Space Museum***

A questionnaire was conducted by the teachers on evaluating the activity. Parts of the survey results were released below.

86% of participants reported that the activity was interesting. 68% of them reported that the activity was useful to them. 87.5% of students reported that they liked the activity.

According to the Prefect of Studies of Star School as reported in Portfolio of Invitational Education Programmes of Star School, after three years' training [from 2003-2006], students had become more knowledgeable about the issues they studied and more civic-minded. Besides, they had acquired the basic learning skills such as searching information, analyzing and reporting which were very essential for life-long learning. Most of them were familiar with presentation with IT support. Most of all, good relationships were built up among teachers and students through such interactive project works.

#### **5 Christmas celebration party**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 20005, two Christmas Fathers visited the five classes of the Form 3 students. They entered each class and celebrated Christmas with them. They had very good time with the students.

I visited the cohort on the same day and witnessed the appearance of the Christmas Fathers. On that morning, the whole school celebrated the advent of Christmas. All Form 3 classes had Christmas parties in their classrooms. In one of the classes, the students were celebrating birthdays for their classmates. Suddenly, two Christmas Fathers appeared and came into the class. All the students were excited to see them and they screamed in surprise. In fact, the two Christmas Fathers were disguised by two of the Form 3 teachers. Santa Claus sings Christmas songs and presents gifts to children. The two Santa Clauses were of no exception. They sang Christmas songs together with the students and presented gifts to some lucky students by means of lucky draws.

In the field visit, I really sensed the close relationships among the students and the good relationships between the students and their teachers. Triangulating with the in-depth interview data, some of the informants described their teachers as friends and



tutors and they treated their students like their children. In the event, I was really impressed by the two Christmas Fathers disguised by their teachers who were very willing to share their joy with their students on such a festive day after releasing the heavy workload on teaching and marking.

## **6 Fashion show**

On the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2006 a “Fashion Show” was organized by the Form 3 cohort in the assembly hall of Star School as a post-exam activity. The theme of the show concerned “Environmental Protection”; therefore, all the materials used in the show were something that had been used before and become useless then, for example, old clothes, soft drinks cans, etc. and the designs of the clothing should highlight the importance of environmental protection and the dynamics of people. I attended the school event with the focus of observation: the creativity of the study participants. The whole event was planned and organized by them. The atmosphere of the show was good, accompanied with occasional cheers of the audience. Wearing the special clothes they designed, the ‘models’ appeared on the stage and subsequently laughter burst out. In this activity, the study participants demonstrated their creativity in the designs of their clothing and their organization skills.

According to the inviting strategies of Star School, students were encouraged to learn through a variety of activities so as to enrich their experiential learning experiences, successful experiences and enhance social relationships in school.

## **7 Pictures representing class identities**

On reviewing the Action Plan of Invitational Education of Star School, 2003-2006 and paying field visits to the case study school, I discovered another inviting strategy that was employed by the Form 3 Quality Circle with a view to establishing class identities and eliciting a sense of belonging. In this strategy, a big picture of an animal, which represented the qualities of the students, was posted on the wall outside each classroom. The following are the field visit data. Animals representing the classes are shown below:

### *Class A [Form 3]*

*Goat: obedience, lovely, unity, active meek, responsible*  
*We were born in the year of goat.*

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*Class B [Form 3]*

*Seal: We are sociable, enthusiastic, adorable and lively.*

*Class C [Form 3]*

*Cinnanon: We are quiet, lovely, diligent, and friendly and we like people*

*Class D [Form 3]*

*Monkey: We are lively, clever, energetic, and clever*

*Class E [Form 3]*

*Lion: We are fierce, persistent and creative.*

## **8 Class-master periods and after-school tutorial classes provided by Form 3 Class-masters**

I also paid short visits to other classes of the Form 3 cohort during the class-master periods (usually after 3: 50 PM each school day) with a view to observing how study participants reacted to the event. In this period, students were supposed to do their revisions and do homework assigned on that day. However, I observed that not many students were doing homework. Some were talking and some were sleeping. A couple of classes were noisy.

Moreover, observing the after-school tutorial classes, it was found that class-masters just taught a small group of students who had problems with their schoolwork; in other words, not all students were required to stay behind for the classes. On a couple of occasions, students were actually told to stay after school to do the homework once again because they failed to submit their homework in time, for example, extra practice with English dictations. A couple of informants also mentioned this but they did not regard the 'detention' as a punishment because they could improve dictations with the teachers' individual guidance. In another group, students formed a small group and discussed homework themselves under the supervision of the class-master.

## **9 Poster Board Painting Competition (Form 3 Inter-class Competition – Grandpriz)**

Poster Board Painting Competition was one of the Form 3 Inter-class Competitions (Grandpriz). It was held at 4: 00 PM on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2006 in Arts room of Star School. The competition, which was organized by Form 3 Quality Circle, aimed to enhance co-operation among schoolmates and promote creativity. I attended the competition and spent about 1 hour in the venue, observing the process of the competition. There were six groups, with about six participants each. They were quite disciplined and industrious. The theme concerned ‘anti-crime and they needed to do their paintings on boards provided by the teachers. During the visit, I conducted some informal interviews with the participants with the permission of the teacher. I focused on how they felt about the activity and they learnt in this event. The following is the summary of the interviews.

- most of them found it interesting and they joined in the activity on their own accord; however, a few participants said the activity was very prosaic, but it was more meaningful than killing the time in the street or having nothing to do at home
- some wanted to have fun with other classmates
- the activity was important to their classes and they could learnt co-operation
- they liked the sense of competitiveness
- they enjoyed the feeling of togetherness
- the activity did not affect their normal learning
- girls showed keener interest in the activity

## Appendix 12

### Samples of Interview Scripts (Interview Transcription, from Chinese to English)

#### Script (1)

Code : 3BLKW1  
Date of Interview : 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2006  
Time : 2:00 – 2:40  
Name of Interviewee : Wah-ka  
Sex : Male

#### Session 1

Before the actual interview, Interviewer explained the aim of the interview project and invited the interviewee to ask questions about the project.

#### Information obtained through a short structured interview

Age : 15  
Duration in the present school : 2 year and 5 months [since September 2003]  
Distance between school and home : 30 minutes' walk from home

#### Abbreviation:

Researcher – interviewer

Wah-ka – interviewee

Researcher : What do you think about the environment of this school? You may talk about the appearance of the school, the garden, the wall, the equipments, etc.

Wah-ka : Very good.

Researcher : What is good about it?

Wah-ka : Em...em...teachers are very respectful and students here are very nice.

Researcher : Okay, but how about the school environment?

Wah-ka : Good...I know some of our schoolmates are responsible for growing the plants and flowers. The school garden is well taken care.

Researcher : Do you think that a greenish environment is important to students?

- Wah-ka : Yes...we feel very comfortable. The comfortable environment makes us learn much better.
- Researcher : What is your feeling like when you come to school every morning?
- Wah-ka : Coming to school every morning....? I feel very excited.
- Researcher : What makes you feel excited?
- Wah-ka : I expect that something new may happen.
- Researcher : Actually, what new things do you expect?
- Wah-ka : Well, some prizes...some funny things to play.
- Researcher : You have been in this school for three years. What is your relationship with your classmates like?
- Wah-ka : Very good.
- Researcher : How good is it?
- Wah-ka : I often help them and they often help me.
- Researcher : How do you help them and how do they help you?
- Wah-ka : They help me solve the difficult mathematical problems.
- Researcher : Can they really help you?
- Wah-ka : Yes, sure. Sometimes, I forgot to bring back my belongings. They will help me bring them back to me. I am very weak at English and they are very keen to answer my questions.
- Researcher : What is the most unforgettable activity or event they have ever had in this school?
- Wah-ka : It is the camp in Form 2 [Multiple Intelligence Training Camp].
- Researcher : What did you contribute to this training camp?
- Wah-ka : A week's time.
- Researcher : What happened to you in this week?
- Wah-ka : Well, I had the chance to play with my classmates in the camp for a week.
- Researcher : What did you learn in this camp?
- Wah-ka : I had to take care of myself.
- Researcher : Taking care of yourself, what is its importance to you?
- Wah-ka : When I leave school and work, my parents can't take care of me forever.
- Researcher : Anything you learnt that is very important to you?
- Wah-ka : Unity is very important.
- Researcher : What is the importance of unity to you?
- Wah-ka : Because...as a story tells, a branch can be broken easily but a bunch of branches can be broken easily.
- Researcher : Good, but is unity related to your studies in school?

- Wah-ka : Yes, yes. Only one person can't think out the solutions but when many people think about the problems together, they will become very simple and the solutions will be worked out very quickly.
- Researcher : Is there any more experience about the camp?
- Wah-ka : In the camp, I really realized that my class was very co-operative.
- Researcher : Any more that you find useful to you?
- Wah-ka : I realize that we are very co-operative.
- Researcher : Any more?
- Wah-ka : I was aware that it would be very effective if we could follow the coach's instructions.
- Researcher : Good, listening to instructions is very useful. Any more that you learnt in the camp was very useful for you in the future?
- Wah-ka : Yes...yes...survival skills.
- Researcher : Really? Tell me what they are.
- Wah-ka : Em...we learnt how to use the map...and we had to wash our clothes ourselves.
- Researcher : Which subjects do you like most?
- Wah-ka : Mathematics.
- Researcher : What has made you like Mathematics?
- Wah-ka : It is very challenging to me. There are some difficult and easy mathematical questions. Well, very difficult...I have to spend very long time to solve the problems.
- Researcher : What aspects of Mathematics have bothered you?
- Wah-ka : The abilities of thinking and analysis.
- Researcher : What do you think about your ability of thinking?
- Wah-ka : Just satisfactory...so I need to train up myself with Mathematics.
- Researcher : In the process of learning Mathematics, how do you feel?
- Wah-ka : Em...very excited...very keen to get the answers.
- Researcher : What has made you feel so excited?
- Wah-ka : Some classmates can get the answers very easily but I don't know why I can't. I feel very excited.
- Researcher : You feel very excited. Okay, what do you expect actually?
- Wah-ka : I expect to get a new formulae....a simple method...I use it to get the answers more easily.
- Researcher : Getting simple methods to get the answers, what is its importance to you?
- Wah-ka : Yes, it is important because I can save much more time while taking exams.
- Researcher : Good, thanks. What activities do you like?

- Wah-ka : Basketball and football.
- Researcher : What do you like about them?
- Wah-ka : Em...Okay...we need to be co-operative, very sportive...we need strategies, and use our mind too.
- Researcher : Okay, thanks. What changes have you made in these years?
- Wah-ka : I was lazier in the past...but now in Form 3, I am more hard working...well, because I want to be promoted to Form 4.
- Researcher : You are working harder because you want to be promoted to Form 4. Any more changes to share with me?
- Wah-ka : I do revision more frequently than before.
- Researcher : Good...what has made you change that way...except the reason that you want to be promoted to Form 4?
- Wah-ka : I want to select the subjects I like in Form 4.
- Researcher : Which subject do you like?
- Wah-ka : Science subjects.
- Researcher : In addition to the changes you mentioned earlier, what other changes have you made?
- Wah-ka : I harass my classmates less frequently now....in the past, I liked to make jokes with my classmates. Now I discuss my school work...Mathematics with them.
- Researcher : What has made you harass your classmates less frequently?
- Wah-ka : I am much more mature now.
- Researcher : Okay. In these years, what is the thing that you have got this school is the most important and valuable to you?
- Wah-ka : Knowledge and friends.
- Researcher : What kind of knowledge do you mean?
- Wah-ka : I have learnt the correct attitude life and how to communicate with people. I have also learnt how to do Mathematical problems...English...another foreign language for me to communicate with foreign people.
- Researcher : You have just mentioned friends. Who do you include in your 'friends'?
- Wah-ka : Myself and my teachers.
- Researcher : Your teachers and classmates, what is their importance to you?
- Wah-ka : The sirs [male teachers] often help me in my studies...and they will help me in the future. So we have very good relationship.
- Researcher : What is your expectation?
- Wah-ka : I wish I could study in a university.
- Researcher : What kind of job do you like to do?
- Wah-ka : The job should not be too tough but I can get more money.

Researcher : What is the job in the mind?  
Wah-ka : The clerical work...in the office.  
Researcher : What kind of job do you think is very tough and has low pay?  
Wah-ka : Work in McDonald's.  
Researcher : What told you about that?  
Wah-ka : Some of my friends who have worked with McDonad's told me that the job was very tough but they earned very little from it.  
Researcher : What do your parents view this school?  
Wah-ka : In the beginning, they thought it was a bad school. But later, when they saw my improvement I made in this school, they then changed their attitude towards this school.  
Researcher : What changes about you did you see?  
Wah-ka : I have improved in my academic performance...the results of many different subjects.  
Researcher : Before coming to this school, what did they think about this school?  
Wah-ka : Many people said this school was very bad.  
Researcher : Now do you agree with them?  
Wah-ka : No, of course. There are many good points about this school.  
Researcher : What is good about this school?  
Wah-ka : At lease, I got many prizes in sports...the environment is not too bad. I am more obedient now.



## Script (2)

Code : 3DFNL1  
Date of Interview : 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2006  
Time : 3:50 pm – 4: 30 pm  
Name of Interviewee : Lai-ngai  
Sex : Female

### Session 2

At the beginning of the second session, the interviewer expressed his gratitude to the interviewee's valuable contribution to the interview project again. Then he asked the interviewee to read the tape script together with him, making any clarification or elaboration if necessary. Next, the interviewer explained the aspects he was going to explore with the interviewee subsequently in that session.

Researcher : In these years, have you ever experienced yourself or heard about any theft, any vandalism or bullying in this school?

Lai-ngai : No...I haven't experienced any cases.

Researcher : Are there any rules or school policies that you think are very useful or important to you?

Lai-ngai : The library is useful...for example, the teachers mention some topics related to the textbooks in class and they will give us some names of books which can be found in the school library. So except Mathematics, we can learn a lot of knowledge from the library because we can't learn this in the textbooks. The computer is also useful. Sometimes we don't want to use a dictionary so we visit the websites and we can find the meanings of words at the websites after we input the key words.

Researcher : So you have found the use of library and the computer can help you learn. Okay, how about school rules.

Lai-ngai : School rules....students are not allowed to bring their mobile phones to school. Sometimes their phones are new models. Someone will steal them. Then they will lose a lot of money. It costs about \$5000 each.

Researcher : So you agree that students should not bring their mobile phones back to school. I see your points. Are there any rules or school policies that you don't like?

Lai-ngai : Girls are required to buckle up their long hair.

Researcher : Many girls have told me about that. Actually, what is bad about it?

Lai-ngai : Sometimes I buckle up my long hair but sometimes I don't. Miss [name of teacher] advises us to buckle up our long hair because it is very dusty outside

school and our hair will be very dirty. But I don't want to do it.

Researcher : Okay, thanks. You formed a study group before the exam. What do you think about the attitude of learning in your class now?

Lai-ngai : It has become much better because the final exam is coming nearer. Mr [name of teacher] reminded us that after several weeks, we would have the final exam and we should study harder. If we were lazy in the past, we had to study harder during the Easter holidays. And after the Easter holidays, we had to be very attentive in class so that we could keep pace with the school work.

Researcher : You are improving in the attitude of learning. How do you improve it?

Lai-ngai : In some lessons, we were not very attentive but now we sit very quietly in class and listen to teachers. If they cannot understand the lessons, they will ask their teachers. When one has finished their questions, many questions will follow.

Researcher : You could not see this situation in the past, could you?

Lai-ngai : Yes.

Researcher : There is a big picture of an animal posted on the wall outside your classroom. What does it represent?

Lai-ngai : [Laughter]. We have one classmate in our class, who is nicknamed as seal. He has been our monitor....representing our class.

Researcher : What does it represent?

Lai-ngai : A monitor should finish all his work hand in their homework. Unless he can do it, he can't take on the post of class monitor. So the monitor should represent the academic performance of our class.

Researcher : What is your academic performance like?

Lai-ngai : I think it is satisfactory.

Researcher : Seeing the picture, how do you feel?

Lai-ngai : A very special feeling...the picture was produced based on our suggestions although the words on the picture were not created by us. It would be much better if we could create the words about the picture.

Researcher : Do you agree with the descriptions of the picture about your class?

Lai-ngai : Okay, it is not too bad.

Researcher : You have been in the same class together with the same classmates for three years. What do you think about this arrangement?

Lai-ngai : Yes, very good.

Researcher : What is so good about it?

Lai-ngai : If I am re-allocated to a different class after each school term, then my friends are separated. In a new class, we don't understand each classmate's personalities. Then we don't understand each other's feelings and we won't have a

close relationship. I need close friends who can understand me.

Researcher : If you are so close and acquainted, is your mood of learning affected during the lessons?

Lai-ngai : No...no.

Researcher : There maybe another arrangement for streaming. Students are divided into five classes according to their academic performance, students with the best results will be allocated to the first class and the worst allocated to the fifth class. What do you think about this streaming policy?

Lai-ngai : I don't think this policy is good to us. Students in the worst class may have very low self-esteem. They want to study hard in this school and gain bright prospect but if they are allocated in the worst class, they won't have the mood to study hard.

Researcher : If you were allocated to the best class, how would you react?

Lai-ngai : I won't be happy because I don't know if I have the ability to keep pace with the other classmates.

Researcher : So what would you choose?

Lai-ngai : I would choose the class having average academic performance, like the class I am studying in.

Researcher : Okay, I see. How do your parents view this school?

Lai-ngai : My mother's friends told us that this was a bad school. But I think this school is not too bad. It is quite different from what they told us.

Researcher : What differences have you found?

Lai-ngai : Before I came to study in this school, I felt that this was a bad school. Now I have been here with the classmates and teachers for several years. I found it was not too bad.

Researcher : So you don't agree with the comments you have heard, do you?

Lai-ngai : No.

Researcher : Three years ago, when you knew that your were allocated to this school, how did you feel at that time?

Lai-ngai : I felt very happy.

Researcher : Really? Tell me more about that.

Lai-ngai : I know I can't have good academic results. If I were allocated to a good school, my mother would be very happy. But I would be very upset because I could not keep pace with other classmates. Perhaps, students who study in a good school should have very good quality.

Researcher : Do you think that this school is suitable for you?

Lai-ngai : Yes, it is very suitable for me.

Researcher : What aspects have you found suitable for you?

Lai-ngai : Learning in the classroom...all the time in school.

Researcher : What is the most unforgettable activity or event they have ever had in this school?

Lai-ngai : Em...em...it should be the picnic in Form one [2003-2004] and the camp organized for our class at the beginning of Form 3 [2005-2006].

Researcher : About the picnic, what have you found so unforgettable?

Lai-ngai : It was the first time I went on a picnic with my classmates. We shared the money and bought a lot of food for the picnic. We carried several bags each....very happy.

Researcher : You felt very excited about your first picnic with your classmates. Good. What memory did you get from this picnic?

Lai-ngai : Our class was very playful. Some barbecued and some went to explore the site. I left the group and returned to the barbecue site on the half way because I saw a grave there. I ran away from it.

Researcher : How about the camp...what have you found it so unforgettable?

Lai-ngai : In Form 1, we also had a multiple intelligence challenging camp together with students from the other classes. But this camp was organized for our class only. It was the first time we organized a camp for ourselves.

Researcher : How did you feel in the camp organized for your class only?

Lai-ngai : The camp was cancelled in August because of the thunder storm so we were excited that we could go to this camp at last.

Researcher : What did you contribute to this camp?

Lai-ngai : The time we should have spent with our family.

Researcher : Did you find this camp worthwhile?

Lai-ngai : Yes.

Researcher : What do you find it so worthwhile?

Lai-ngai : It was the first time our class organized the camp. It was the first time I went through a graveyard alone in the dark. It was very dark. I cried on the way....very frightened. I had to go through the graveyard alone. Mr L [name of the teacher] and the social worker encouraged me to do so. Actually, they were following me at the back so I would not be so frightened.

Researcher : How did you feel during the activity?

Lai-ngai : I think I was not brave enough to go through the graveyard in the dark. But I was very happy.

Researcher : You think you were not brave but you were very happy.

Lai-ngai : Yes, the boys knew that the girls were very frightened and they volunteered to accompany us to go through the graveyard. I was very happy because I didn't need to go alone. And some classmates cared about me.

Researcher : You treasured the accompany by your classmates. Okay. What did you learn from this activity?

Lai-ngai : Unity is very important. Before going through the graveyard in the dark, we had some group activities in the room in order to strength our unity first.

Researcher : Any more you can tell me?

Lai-ngai : Well, we treasured our friendship. We were afraid that some of us would have accidents during the trip.

Researcher : In this school what is the thing that you have you got is the most valuable or important to you?

Lai-ngai : Teachers' care and classmates' friendship among classmates.

Researcher : What is their importance to you?

Lai-ngai : We were small in the primary school and we did not have the chance to see each other after some years. Now we are older and we can make contact with each other after leaving school. We shall see each other in two or three years' time.

Researcher : You do treasure your good relationship, don't you?

Lai-ngai : Yes...yes.

Researcher : What are the merits about yourself that you like most?

Lai-ngai : I like laughing.

Researcher : Laughing...is it important to you?

Lai-ngai : I look very pitiful if I am very sad. There may be a big event that has happened to me.

Researcher : What are your weaknesses that you don't like very much?

Lai-ngai : Weaknesses...? Sometimes, we made a lot of noise in class and therefore the teachers scolded us. Then the next day, I would be in a bad mood in class. I think I am not persistent enough.

Researcher : Thank you for your sharing today. I would like you to share with me in the next session.

### Script (3)

Code : 3BCKY1  
Date of Interview : 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2006  
Time : 3:50-4:30  
Name of Interviewee : Yan-ka  
Sex : Female

### Session 3

Researcher : How would you feel being a student here for three years?  
Ying-ka : People outside this school think this is a bad school and students in this school are very complicated. They really think this school is very very dark.  
Researcher : Then what do you think about this school as a matter of fact?  
Ying-ka : It is not so bad as described. They have just seen some of our bad students.  
Researcher : How do you feel about their description about your school?  
Ying-ka : I think they intend to speak ill of our school.  
Researcher : What do you think about the school life in these years?  
Ying-ka : Not too bad actually.  
Researcher : What change would you like to make in order to make it much more happier?  
Ying-ka : I should be concerned about other people more often.  
Researcher : How would you be more concerned about other people?  
Ying-ka : If people don't like doing something, I should not push them to do it. If they have found something difficult, I should offer help to them.  
Researcher : What would you do when you encounter difficulties in learning or daily life?  
Ying-ka : I will ask people who are close to me.  
Researcher : Who are they?  
Ying-ka : Well, friends and teachers. I will seek advice from friends first and then my mum, lastly my teachers.  
Researcher : How about learning, who will you seek advice?  
Ying-ka : My teachers.  
Researcher : Can you achieve what you want?  
Ying-ka : Yes.  
Researcher : How often do you seek advice from your teachers?  
Ying-ka : Very seldom.  
Researcher : How would you solve your problems in learning?

- Ying-ka : Read more books and try to find out the solutions, for example, read books about history, look at the pictures and watch TV.
- Researcher : What do you think about your academic performance?
- Ying-ka : Very poor...I have not tried my best.
- Researcher : How about your ability of learning?
- Ying-ka : Lazy...I think my ability of learning is not too bad.
- Researcher : Do you mean that you have not tried your best to learn, don't you?
- Ying-ka : I think so.
- Researcher : What would you do if you wish to have a change in your academic achievement?
- Ying-ka : I should make friends with those who take a serious attitude towards learning so that I can seek advice from them if I have any problems in learning.
- Researcher : Can you achieve this aim in this school?
- Ying-ka : Yes, I think so. Well, we can help each other.
- Researcher : I know you have very close relationship with your classmates. Do you think that the relationship of this type has affected your studies?
- Ying-ka : Yes, sometimes.
- Researcher : Any advantages have you got from this relationship?
- Ying-ka : Sure, before the examination of the last term, I did not do revision but played computer games. When my classmates knew this, they phoned me up, asking me to study hard for the examination.
- Researcher : As you told me last time, you formed a study group before the exam, didn't you?
- Ying-ka : Yes. I found it useful to me.
- Researcher : OK, I see, that is why you said when you have many friends with a serious attitude towards learning will help you. OK, do you want to study in a university?
- Ying-ka : Yes, but I think I mayn't do it.
- Researcher : What obstacles would you anticipate for this?
- Ying-ka : I am lazy and I am not willing to do revision. My attitude towards learning is not serious enough.
- Researcher : OK, I see, you think you are lazy. Then how would you make yourself study much harder?
- Ying-ka : I should have a goal. For the time being, I want to study in Form 4, step by step.
- Researcher : Do you think that studying in a university is your long-term goal?
- Ying-ka : Yes.
- Researcher : Do you like praise, prizes or awards?

- Ying-ka : I don't like praises that are too exaggerated
- Researcher : Any examples, please.
- Ying-ka : Just like the scholarship or the improvement award scheme, if I cannot achieve the standards and I get the prizes, I don't think this is good. I mean too easy to get them is not good.
- Researcher : Do you think that are there appropriate awards for students in this school?
- Ying-ka : Yes, I think so. I have got an award.
- Researcher : Oh, good, how did you feel then?
- Ying-ka : I showed it to my mum. I wanted to tell her that I was not too bad in fact.
- Researcher : How did she react to this?
- Ying-ka : She thought that obtaining this award was just a small matter.
- Researcher : OK, I see, it was quite different from your expectation. How did you feel then?
- Ying-ka : I felt a bit frustrated.
- Researcher : Did you really think that you were able to obtain that award?
- Ying-ka : Yes, but not too much because there are many bright students in my class. So I think that I got this award because there were too many awards for students, too easy for us to get them.
- Researcher : OK, you think it is too easy for you to get the awards. What do you think the purposes of the school to award students?
- Ying-ka : Teachers want to give us encouragement.
- Researcher : Do you think that the encouragement of this type effective?
- Ying-ka : Yes, I want to make greater improvement in the future.
- Researcher : OK, so you have dynamics to study harder. Well, do you have a habit of procrastination?
- Ying-ka : Yes. [Smiles]
- Researcher : What makes you procrastinate doing things?
- Ying-ka : Sometimes my mum told me to tidy the room; at that time I was playing computer games so I didn't want to do it right away. Perhaps, I am too keen to play.
- Researcher : How about doing homework?
- Ying-ka : Yes, the same. [Smiles].
- Researcher : What has made you procrastinate doing homework?
- Ying-ka : I want to watch TV or play computer games.
- Researcher : OK, do you want to leave more time for you to get the things done much better?
- Ying-ka : No.



- Researcher : You think you can't do things well, so you want to avoid doing them, don't you?
- Ying-ka : Yes, I have thought this.
- Researcher : When you fail in tests or exams, how do you react to them?
- Ying-ka : I think this is normal for me. I often fail in them. I am used to it. I don't do any revisions beforehand.
- Researcher : What would you do next?
- Ying-ka : If I have really made the effort to prepare for it, I think I won't deserve this failure. And I will work much harder.
- Researcher : What will you do then?
- Ying-ka : I do revisions more frequently and pay attention to teachers in class. Now I am much attentive in class.
- Researcher : Do teachers try their best to help you improve your academic performance?
- Ying-ka : Yes.
- Researcher : What do they do to help you?
- Ying-ka : For example, the English teacher would explain to us more carefully if we could not follow her.
- Researcher : Any more examples?
- Ying-ka : Yes, Mathematics teacher would explain to us more clearly by giving us more examples.
- Researcher : OK, what do you think about your textbooks, teaching materials and the school curriculum? Are they suitable for you?
- Ying-ka : Mathematics is much more complicated and it is boring. I find Chinese interesting because they are interesting stories.
- Researcher : Now you have an additional lesson at the end of each school day, what do you think about this arrangement?
- Ying-ka : We can ask teachers about our homework at that time if we have any problems.
- Researcher : Do you think that this aim has been achieved?
- Ying-ka : No. Sometimes the teachers do some routine things about the class.
- Researcher : Thanks for your sharing. We've finished our interview.

### Script (4)

Code : 3DSC1  
Date of Interview : 20<sup>th</sup> January 2006  
Time : 3:50-4:30  
Name of Interviewee : Ching-ching  
Sex : Female

### Session 1

Abbreviation:

Researcher – interviewer

Ching-ching – interviewee

Researcher : What is your feeling like when you come to school every morning?  
Ching-ching : That is the new beginning of the day.  
Researcher : A new day begins, right?  
Ching-ching : Yes, I don't know what will happen today.  
Researcher : What do you expect to happen today?  
Ching-ching : Today I don't want to be scolded.  
Researcher : This is a bad thing, right? Anything good will happen?  
Ching-ching : Yes, I hope I will be praised.  
Researcher : Which do you expect more, to be scolded or to be praised?  
Ching-ching : Of course, to be praised.  
Researcher : OK, in fact, in these two years, have you been frequently praised or scolded?  
Ching-ching : Half and half.  
Researcher : In what aspects have you been praised more?  
Ching-ching : Dancing...sometimes in English lessons, when I can respond to the teacher correctly, the teacher will praise me.  
Researcher : Dancing...what kind of dance?  
Ching-ching : It is Jazz.  
Researcher : For Jazz, in what aspects were you praised?  
Ching-ching : I can dance quite well...as compared with other [dancers], I can use the appropriate strength.  
Researcher : OK, how about English, in what aspects were you praised?  
Ching-ching : Somebody said to me in surprise, "Wow, you are very smart. You

can answer such a difficult question!" And I can do my schoolwork properly so I am praised

Researcher : Who are they?

Ching-ching : Most of them are my classmates and some are teachers.

Researcher : How did the teachers praise you?

Ching-ching : Teachers ?...You are more obedient...you can do it...well done...study harder.

Researcher : When you heard that, how did you feel?

Ching-ching : I felt very happy.

Researcher : You heard teachers say, you are more obedient...study harder.

Actually, do you often hear your teachers say this way?

Ching-ching : Most of them are Sirs [male teachers]...about half of the teachers. But my classmates praise me more frequently.

Researcher : So classmates praise you more often than your teachers.

Ching-ching : Yes.

Researcher : Do you know what your image is like among your classmates?

Ching-ching : Me?...comparatively more active...I think they consider me as the person who can share their feelings.

Researcher : Good, tell me more about that.

Ching-ching : I don't think I am a bad girl. I won't disclose my classmates' secrets.... especially the important things, just except for the funny things.

Researcher : You won't disclose other classmates' secrets. So your classmates trust you, don't they?

Ching-ching : Yes, yes.

Researcher : I think you expect to be praised more frequently, don't you?

Ching-ching : Yes.

Researcher : Are there any classmates who have got the similar feeling like yours?

Ching-ching : I think there are many.

Researcher : In these years, what changes have you got?

Ching-ching : In Form 1 [2003], I was more diligent...but in Form 2, I became lazier. Now in Form 3 [2005-2006], I can keep pace with the schoolwork and I am not so lazy as I was in Form 2.

Researcher : So do you think you have made improvement?

Ching-ching : I have improved in some areas but I can't do well in other areas.

Researcher : Let me know about your improvement first.

Ching-ching : English...at least... I know more than the time when I first came to study in this school. And I can draw much better now.

Researcher : What are the differences?

Ching-ching : In the past, I just knew how to draw silly things...during the Arts lessons, I can draw more and much better now.

Researcher : Good, what else?

Ching-ching : I participate in more activities. And my mood is much better than the past.

Researcher : What has made you take part in activities more frequently?

Ching-ching : Ah...sometimes the activities in school are very interesting. And my classmates ask me to join them so I take part in some of them...like the Poster Painting Competition.

Researcher : Fine...then what has contributed to the positive change of your mood this year?

Ching-ching : I have made more friends [classmates]. And I can see they have improvement in their personality so I don't feel pressurized. This year is quite different. They have changed their personality...much better so we can play together more happily.

Researcher : Well, you found that your classmates have improved in their characters, so you are very happy about their change.

Ching-ching : Yes, yes.

Researcher : OK, they have made improvement, but how is it related to you?

Ching-ching : They have made improvement so when I see them, my mood is much better...in the past, when we played together, some of them cried...I didn't know how to help them at that time. Now they have changed completely.

Researcher : What changes have they got?

Ching-ching : In the past, they were very mingy [easily cried over trivial matters] but now they are not.

Researcher : Give me one example in which they are not mingy any longer.

Ching-ching : For example, in the past, when I pushed down their things carelessly, they would lose temper. And I tried to discuss with them but they would not listen to me. But now they accept my advice and I think I have become a good person

Researcher : They have made positive changes. Is this related to your studies?

Ching-ching : Of course...if I am in bad mood that day, I cannot concentrate myself on the lessons. If I am in good mood, I can be very attentive.

Researcher : So you mean that your mood will affect your concentration, don't you?

Ching-ching : Yes.

Researcher : OK, very interesting.... You have been here for a couple of years. How do your parents and friends view this school?

Ching-ching : In the beginning, they thought that it was a bad school...and my

academic achievement would deteriorate gradually because I was not so bad in the primary school. Now they have changed their attitude towards it. I have understood English much better since I came to study in this school...you know...this school has upgraded as a higher band school [the school that accept students with good academic achievement].

Researcher : In the beginning, your parents were worried about you but now you have improved in English so they have changed their attitude.

Ching-ching : Yes.

Researcher : How about your friends?

Ching-ching : Nothing special...they think that I will not become a bad girl.

Researcher : In these years, what is your unforgettable activity or event?

Ching-ching : In Form 1 [2003], I joined in the training camp....Multiple Intelligence Challenge Camp.

Researcher : When you think of this camp, how do you feel?

Ching-ching : I want to join in the camp once again.

Researcher : You found it very interesting. Tell me something about that.

Ching-ching : In the camp, we played some games that we could not play in our daily life, for example, we had to walk on a rope hanging in the air from one point to another point...we could not imagine that...Moreover, we had to do the tattooing. Then we had to sleep in tents together for several days. We learnt a lot from the training camp.

Researcher : What did you learn?

Ching-ching : Much commonsense knowledge, for example, knotting...I became braver.

Researcher : Tell me how brave you were.

Ching-ching : The street below my flat is very dark and there are many people but I dare not to walk in it alone. In the camp, it was very dark at night...we had to do the bathing alone in the dark. We ran all round the campsite with other classmates. Although it was dark, we did not feel frightened.

Researcher : You ran around the campsite with your classmates in the dark. When you think you could do it, how do you feel?

Ching-ching : I feel that I was really brave.

Researcher : OK, since the camp [2003], what changes have you got?

Ching-ching : I have improved in leadership skills.

Researcher : How do you know that you have improved leadership skills?

Ching-ching : Well, in the camp, we would be scolded by the coach of the camp when we could not attain their requirements. I learnt [this strategy] from them. In my school, I was the trainer of the school cheering team for the sports day. I insisted the team members should attain my requirements. I thought of the strategy that the coach

applied to us. They could really follow what I required them to do. So I think I have got the leadership skills.

Researcher : Good, you applied what you had learnt in the camp to the school cheering team for the sports day and you found it very effective. Well, how do you feel when you have discovered this?

Ching-ching : I felt that I was leading all the team members to dance and strive for the championship. They shouted after me. They danced as instructed. We did better than the other cheering teams.

Researcher : You spent 6 days in the camp. What did you contribute to the camp?

Ching-ching : Spirit, energy...the amount of food...

Researcher : The amount of food? It is very interesting. Tell me more.

Ching-ching : We played, ran and did a lot of work. We felt very hungry. I ate a lot.

Researcher : Oh, I see, you had contributed a lot to the activity. Is it worthwhile?

Ching-ching : Sure.

Researcher : In addition to the activities you have just mentioned, any other activities you want to share with me?

Ching-ching : We went to the camp on Cheung Chau Island...it was only for our class.

Researcher : Was it held in September [2005]?

Ching-ching : Yes.

Researcher : How did you feel about the camp?

Ching-ching : Feeling...it was exciting.

Researcher : What has caused the excitement to you?

Ching-ching : Well...exciting...we had to walk through the graveyard [in the dark]. We were very frightened while walking through the graveyard....it was very interesting.

Researcher : What did you learn from this activity?

Ching-ching : Em...em...team spirit.

Researcher : Many of you have mentioned team spirit. But what is the importance of team spirit in your studies?

Ching-ching : Team spirit...important...for example, in English lessons, we were divided into two groups. We had to answer the teacher's questions and got scores if our answers were right. If we gave wrong answers, then our team would lose the competition. Then we had a sense of guilt. So I think team spirit is very important.

Researcher : OK, it is almost the time for the next lesson. Thank you for your sharing. I would like you to share more with me next time.

### Script (5)

Code : 3EPMH1  
Date of Interview : 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006  
Time : 2:15 – 2: 55  
Name of Interviewee : Ho-man  
Sex : Male

### Session 2

Researcher : What do you think about the environment of this school? You may talk about the appearance of the school, the garden, the wall, the equipments, etc.

Ho-man : Nothing special...good...I feel good.

Researcher : What is it good about?

Ho-man : Beautiful.

Researcher : What do you think is beautiful?

Ho-man : It is beautiful...just a feeling.

Researcher : Three yeas ago, when you knew that you were allocated to this school, how did you feel?

Ho-man : I felt very happy.

Researcher : What made you feel that way?

Ho-man : I could make many different friends.

Researcher : What did you expect when you came to study in this school?

Ho-man : No, I didn't have any expectation.

Researcher : I see...you could make many friends here. How do your parents or friends view this school?

Ho-man : Nothing special...we seldom talk about our school.

Researcher : In this school, how do your teachers make you feel happier or more successful?

Ho-man : Nothing.

Researcher : There is a big picture of an animal posted on the wall outside your classroom. What does it represent?

Ho-man : It is a lion.

Researcher : What does it represent?

Ho-man : It represents the special qualities of our class.

Researcher : What are the special qualities of your class?

Ho-man : I forgot them.

Researcher : How do you feel about the picture?

Ho-man : Something good.

Researcher : What has made you feel that way?

Ho-man : The lion is beautiful.

Researcher : Okay, I can see there is a large group photo [the students took this picture in August 2003 when they came to join in an orientation programme for new comers] hanging on the wall outside the school library. Are you included in it?

Ho-man : Yes.

Researcher : What you see this photo, how do you feel?

Ho-man : I have found my face is different. It is quite strange to me now.

Researcher : Do you think that this feeling is good to you?

Ho-man : No.

Researcher : What has made you feel that way?

Ho-man : I looked quite obedient in the past.

Researcher : What is the difference now?

Ho-man : I look very naughty now.

Researcher : In what aspects have you found yourself naughty?

Ho-man : I often tell lies.

Researcher : Okay...you think you are naughty because you often tell lies. Well, seeing the photo, do you have some good or bad memories?

Ho-man : Bad memories.

Researcher : In these years, have you got any unforgettable activity or event in this school?

Ho-man : No...no.

Researcher : What is the thing that you have got in this school is the most valuable or important to you?

Ho-man : No.

Researcher : Okay, let's have another topic. Are there any rules or school policies that you think are very useful?

Ho-man : Em...em...No.

Researcher : Are there any rules or school policies that you don't like?

Ho-man : No...I don't have any.

Researcher : Well, let's change to another topic. Have you got any merits about yourself that you like very much?

Ho-man : Merits...no...but weakness...there are a lot about me.

Researcher : Okay, tell me your merits first.

Ho-man : No...but often I tell lies....use bad language.

Researcher : I see...

Ho-man : I hit people without good reason.

Researcher : Do you often do this?

Ho-man : No, not too often.



Researcher : Do you often tell lies?  
 Ho-man : Yes.  
 Researcher : You often tell lies...use bad language and hit people without good reason. Any more?  
 Ho-man : No.  
 Researcher : Last time, you mentioned the expectation of your parents. Tell me about it today?  
 Ho-man : He wants me to complete Form 5...but he has not discussed my job with me.  
 Researcher : About your teachers...what is their expectation on you?  
 Ho-man : Just ask me not to sleep in class.  
 Researcher : Okay, last time you mentioned you would like to have training in a vocational training school, tell me more about your own expectation?  
 Ho-man : Look for a job after Form 5.  
 Researcher : What kind of job will you look for?  
 Ho-man : Em...em...just any jobs I can find.  
 Researcher : Well, what would you like to choose?  
 Ho-man : I will learn how to cut hair.  
 Researcher : What has made you decide to learn to cut hair?  
 Ho-man : Well...because I like it.  
 Researcher : When did you start to have the interest in cutting hair?  
 Ho-man : When I see people cutting hair, I think it must be very interesting.  
 So I like it.  
 Researcher : Have you ever tried it before?  
 Ho-man : No.  
 Researcher : When did you think of taking up a job as hair dresser?  
 Ho-man : In Form 3...recently...I did not remember the details.  
 Researcher : What feeling will hair cutting bring to you?  
 Ho-man : Em...em...when I have cut hair, then I feel very happy.  
 Researcher : What do you see so you feel very happy?  
 Ho-man : When I have cut hair for people and they say to me, 'good work'.  
 Researcher : I see...you are happy when you are praised about your good work.  
 Ho-man : Yes.  
 Researcher : Do you think being a hair dresser has a good pay?  
 Ho-man : I am not sure.  
 Researcher : How about its prospect?  
 Ho-man : I think it may be good.  
 Researcher : Do you think that it is easy to find a job like this?  
 Ho-man : I think so.

Researcher : What are the criteria for a hair dresser?  
 Ho-man : I don't know.  
 Researcher : You have been learning for many years. What do you think about learning itself?  
 Ho-man : It is very boring.  
 Researcher : What has made you feel that way?  
 Ho-man : Em...em...I am not interested in learning.  
 Researcher : When did you start to feel that way?  
 Ho-man : When I was very young, I did not like learning.  
 Researcher : Okay, you do not like learning, but what do you like?  
 Ho-man : I like Arts lessons.  
 Researcher : Oh, I see you don't mean you don't like all subjects. Now you tell me you like Arts lessons. Any more you like?...[Pause]. What feeling do Arts lessons bring to you?  
 Ho-man : Nothing special...but when I have chance to draw, I feel very happy.  
 Researcher : So when you have Arts lessons, what is your feeling like?  
 Ho-man : Very happy...just I have a chance to draw.  
 Researcher : Is there any difference in your behaviours as compared with those in the other lessons?  
 Ho-man : I do a lot of drawing. [in Arts lessons].  
 Researcher : Do you think that you are very attentive [in Arts lessons]?  
 Ho-man : Just drawing ... I don't talk.  
 Researcher : Do you do your work well in Arts lessons?  
 Ho-man : I think so.  
 Researcher : How do you know that you can do well?....[Pause] Has anyone praised your work?  
 Ho-man : No...but I think I can draw quite well.  
 Researcher : How well could you draw?  
 Ho-man : Just beautiful.  
 Researcher : What did you draw recently?  
 Ho-man : I drew a human face.  
 Researcher : Tell me how well you drew.  
 Ho-man : It looked like the real one [human face]. [Smile]  
 Researcher : Good, you can really do well. I can see you smile on your face now [Laughter]. What did your classmates say about your picture?  
 Ho-man : Some said it looked like a real one but some said it didn't.  
 Researcher : Then what do you think about it yourself?  
 Ho-man : I think it did.

Researcher : As you told me, you didn't like to study since you were young; but you like drawing. How do your teachers help you develop your ability of drawing?

Ho-man : No.

Researcher : Do you work hard on drawing?

Ho-man : I don't draw any more now.

Researcher : You drew a lot when you were small, didn't you?

Ho-man : Yes.

Researcher : When you were small, how did you put effort on drawing?

Ho-man : I would draw the pictures again and again until they looked like the things I intended to draw....when I was at Primary six.

Researcher : You said you don't draw any more now. What stopped you from drawing in the way you mentioned?

Ho-man : Em...em...when I was in Form 2 [2005], my classmates often laughed at my pictures that I drew.

Researcher : You liked drawing very much when you were small and you would draw the picture again and again until they looked like the things you intended to draw. But when you were in Form 2, your classmates always laughed at your works because they thought they were not good, didn't they?

Ho-man : Yes.

Researcher : How did it happen [classmates laughed at his pictures]?

Ho-man : When I was drawing a picture, they [classmates] saw it.

Researcher : What were you drawing at that time?

Ho-man : I was drawing a picture out of my imagination.

Researcher : Did you think that you could draw well at that time?

Ho-man : Yes, it was good.

Researcher : But your classmates saw it and they laughed at it.

Ho-man : They said the picture did not look like the thing I intended to draw.

Researcher : I can see that you enjoy drawing but has anyone praised your pictures, for example, your teachers?

Ho-man : My aunt.

Researcher : What did she say about your pictures?

Ho-man : She said, my picture looked like the thing I intended to draw.

Researcher : How did you feel then?

Ho-man : I felt very happy...it was the first time for somebody to praise me.

Researcher : How often do people praise you?

Ho-man : No...not too often.

Researcher : In what aspects have you been praised?

Ho-man : Just drawing.

Researcher : What else?  
 Ho-man : No.  
 Researcher : Do people often laugh at you?  
 Ho-man : Yes, people often laugh at me.  
 Researcher : How do you feel then?  
 Ho-man : Nothing.... I don't know what my feeling is like.  
 Researcher : Okay, thanks. What is a happy school life like?  
 Ho-man : I am not sure.  
 Researcher : Well, you told me, you would draw the pictures again until they looked like the things you intended to draw. Are there any other things that you do in the way like you do the drawing?  
 Ho-man : English...I don't study it but I study Chinese.  
 Researcher : How did you do it?  
 Ho-man : I studied and studied until I understood it.  
 Researcher : How long did you spend on it?  
 Ho-man : Not too long. [Smile].  
 Researcher : You said you do not study English but you study Chinese instead. What is the difference between these two subjects?  
 Ho-man : English is very difficult...I don't know how to read the words...there are too many difficult words.  
 Researcher : How about Chinese...what makes the differences?  
 Ho-man : For Chinese, when I don't understand, I will consult my classmates but no one knows English [in his class].  
 Researcher : Okay, I see. There are classmates who understand Chinese but not English. If you understand the subject, what will you do?  
 Ho-man : I will spend more time on it.  
 Researcher : Can you get any results?  
 Ho-man : I think I will get higher marks. [Looked very puzzled].  
 Researcher : So did you get higher marks in Chinese dictations?  
 Ho-man : Yes.  
 Researcher : Are you sure?  
 Ho-man : Yes. [More confident].  
 Researcher : You have made small improvement in Chinese...are there any subjects you can do well?  
 Ho-man : No more.  
 Researcher : Okay, tell me if there are any obstacles that affect your studies.  
 Ho-man : When I was small, I spent most of the time playing.  
 Researcher : Since childhood, you have been very playful. I see. Okay, if you played less frequently, would you do your school work much better?

Ho-man : I think so.

Researcher : So are you playful now?

Ho-man : Yes, I play a lot.

Researcher : Who do you play with?

Ho-man : My friends.

Researcher : Do your family members help you with your school work?

Ho-man : No.

Researcher : How about teachers?

Ho-man : Yes.

Researcher : How do they help you?

Ho-man : They teach me to read when I don't know.

Researcher : Does this case often happen?

Ho-man : Not too often...when I consult them, they will teach me.

Researcher : Can you get what you ask?

Ho-man : Yes.

Researcher : Are there any differences in the school life between the primary school and the secondary school

Ho-man : I am much happier now...I was not happy in the primary school.

Researcher : What has made you feel that way?

Ho-man : Happy ...because I can make many friends.

Researcher : Are they different from those in the primary school?

Ho-man : Yes, of course, they are different.

Researcher : What are the differences?

Ho-man : They [classmates in this school] tell us jokes and make us laugh.

Researcher : How would you describe your relationship with your classmates?

Ho-man : We had better relationship in the primary school.

Researcher : Okay, your classmates in this school often have fun but you think you had better relationship with those in the primary school...how about your relationship with your teachers?

Ho-man : No difference.

Researcher : Overall, you find the school life of the secondary school is much happier. Just the last question. So are satisfied with the school life here?

Ho-man : I think so

Researcher : That's all for today. Thank you for your sharing today.

## Script (6)

Code : 3DSYN1  
Date of Interview : 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2006  
Time : 3:50 pm – 4: 30 pm  
Name of Interviewee : Ni-yi  
Sex : Female

### Session 3

Researcher : What school policies do you think useful to you?  
Ni-yi : I think the reading scheme. When I am not tired in this reading session, I really do some reading.  
Researcher : What do you think about its effectiveness in these three years?  
Ni-yi : Yes, we bring our books to school and do the reading in this session. We can't do anything else so we have to do the reading in this session and we can finish the books gradually.  
Researcher : Okay, any more?  
Ni-yi : Well, when we are absent on the school days, the school will inform our parents and ask us why we are absent. I think this is good for us. Actually, we need some supervision and we have to go to school every day. Otherwise, we don't go to school and sleep at home again.  
Researcher : Any school policies you don't like?  
Ni-yi : Well, girls have to buckle up their long hair. I think that is bad. I think there is nothing wrong with long hair.  
Researcher : Okay, last time you told me that your unforgettable event was the student camp. Now please tell me what you think is the most useful and important thing that you have learnt in these three years in this school.  
Ni-yi : Well, I have learnt how to make decision, for example, choosing to study in Form 4 or take a career-oriented course. Our teacher always discussed this problem with us. He told us to study hard even though we wanted to take a career-oriented course because we wouldn't have much care from teachers in these vocational training schools. So I think my teachers can teach us how to plan our future so that we won't waste our time. In school, teachers teach us how to plan our future but after leaving school, no one will teach us.  
Researcher : If you want your school life much happier, what changes would you expect?  
Ni-yi : I think my school life here is very satisfactory. What I feel is that the time in this school is rather short. We have already here together for three years.

We are going to leave school very soon.

Researcher : Okay, you have here for about three years. How do you feel being a student in this school?

Ni-yi : Very happy. Mmmm, I was sometimes sad but I was happy here most of the time. I was sad because I sometimes had words with my classmates but we could solve our problems.

Researcher : When you have problems, for example, study problem, how do you usually deal with them?

Ni-yi : If I think I can handle it, I will try to deal with it myself. However, if I feel puzzled and I can't do it myself, I will ask my friends or my teachers. Sometimes I ask my mother because I think my family is quite happy.

Researcher : Okay, thanks. What do you think about your academic performance?

Ni-yi : I don't think I am good. I am lazy and I don't want to study. But I believe everyone can do well if he really studies hard. I like to study together with my classmates.

Researcher : What do you think about your ability of learning?

Ni-yi : I think if I am attentive in class, I can do quite well. I have made a good progress in English. Well, if I am attentive in class, I will find the lessons quite easy.

Researcher : You told me you could not do your school work well, what changes would you expect?

Ni-yi : It really depends on myself. If I want to do well, I have to study hard. But I don't know why I feel bored when I study. I just want to play. I am very happy when I can play with my classmates.

Researcher : There is a Chinese proverb: "Failure is the mother of success". Have you got any experience with this?

Ni-yi : Mmmm, when we had inter-class competitions in Form three, we lost the competitions but we discussed the reasons for the failures. If we have not got any unsuccessful experiences, we don't know how to handle it. So if we have both successful and unsuccessful experiences, then we will have a sense of achievement.

Researcher : Okay, there is another saying: to learn does not aim at aspiring marks. What do you think about it?

Ni-yi : Well, practically, we really want to get good marks. However, in some cases, you have tried your best to study but you fail the tests or exams. I really accept it.

Researcher : So it is still realistic to get good marks. But it is more important you have tried your best, right?

Ni-yi : Yes.

- Researcher : Do you wish to study in a university?
- Ni-yi : Yes, certainly. I feel good about it.
- Researcher : Really? Why do you want to study in a university?
- Ni-yi : I like the university life. There are a variety of activities. And I will obtain much knowledge and I will talk like an educated person. I will make more friends.
- Researcher : Do you like competitions, for example, winning awards or obtaining high positions in exams?
- Ni-yi : Mmmm, I don't like to compete for high positions in exams. I don't care about them because I don't like to study. Well, one of my classmates draws quite well in my class, so I compete with her by doing better than her. She also competes with me. We are quite happy.
- Researcher : You find it interested, don't you?
- Ni-yi : Yes.
- Researcher : Do you think competition makes people improve?
- Ni-yi : Yes, certainly. If we work in a team and we lose, we feel very upset; therefore, we have to be more co-operative and work much harder to win the competitions.
- Researcher : You don't your school work well. What do you think are the reasons for it?
- Ni-yi : I do not study hard. I don't think that we really depend on luck in the exams.
- Researcher : Do you like praises or prizes?
- Ni-yi : I don't think they are necessary. It is good to have some encouraging words. If we can do well and we are praised and encouraged, we will be very happy. "You have done well this time. Study harder next time." I fell very encouraged then. Well, the awards are not real, but a sort of vanity. If you have got a reward and they won't work hard in the future, I don't think the prizes are good to you.
- Researcher : Do you procrastinate about doing things?
- Ni-yi : Mmmm, I don't force myself to do things, really depends on my mood at that time. Take history assignment for an example, I have not handed in the assignment since the last term.
- Researcher : Did you finish it at last?
- Ni-yi : Yes, after a period of time, I feel that I have the responsibility to finish it so I finished it at last.
- Researcher : Then what do you find very keen to do?
- Ni-yi : Play [laughter]. I also like to help people if they have problems. But I can't solve my problems. [laughter]. It is good to help people.



- Researcher : When you fail your tests or exams, how do you react to them?
- Ni-yi : I won't complain if I have not worked hard. However, I will blame myself if I have made an attempt to work hard.
- Researcher : So you care about your results if you have really worked hard for the tests or exams, don't you?
- Ni-yi : That's right.
- Researcher : Okay, how have your teachers helped you improve your academic performance?
- Ni-yi : Well, I think most of my teachers have made the effort to teach us. But we are very inattentive in class. If we really concentrate on our studies, we can do our school well.
- Researcher : What do you think about the text-books, teaching materials and the school curriculum? Are they suitable for you or do you find them practical and interesting?
- Ni-yi : I don't like Mathematics. Since I was in primary school, I have not liked it. I have found it very difficult. Mmmm, but I have found Chinese and English interesting.
- Researcher : That's all for the interviews. Thanks for your sharing.

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## **Appendix 13**

### **Interview with Vice-principal of Star School**

Date/ Time of Interview: 9<sup>th</sup> February 2009 / 6:00 pm – 6:45 pm (45 minute);

Venue: Vice-principal Room

This is a semi-structured interview. The main themes of the interview are as follows:

1. changes of school since June 2006 (the research finished in June 2006)
2. students' performance in general and their academic performance
3. the quality of school life e.g. extra-curricular activities
4. any matters in connection with the implementation of Invitational Education

## Appendix 14

### School of Love and Care Award

A list of winners were officially publicized on Hong Kong Ming Pao Daily on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2009 to celebrate the success of the schools in the awards of “School of Love and Care” and “The Best Parent-school Co-operation School”, which were organized by Hong Kong Christian Services Association in collaboration with Hong Kong Education Bureau. It was reported that there were 139 participating schools in this grand event. Star School acquired the Honorable Award in “School of Love and Care, 2008-2009” and the First Prize in “The Best Parent-school Co-operation School Award”.

The organizing agents stated that Star School had attained outstanding performance in the following aspects:

1. attaining active co-operation and support from parents in school policies
2. disseminating the conception of IE among parents and successfully involving them in the implementation of IE in partnership
3. involving parents in offering help with the student exchange programme in the United States
4. providing learning opportunity for the students from South-east Asian (*in particular, Indian and Pakistan*) and newly arrived children from Mainland China and catering for the special needs of learning (*these types of children usually find it difficult to attain places in mainstream schools*)